



SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

A design workshop was held on the 19th April 2021 for three sites in Easebourne; allocated for residential use within the South Downs Local Plan

1. Easebourne Primary School, Easebourne Street, Easebourne
Construction of 20 new homes, including the conversion of a former school building - SDNP/20/04747/PRE
2. Cowdray Works Yard, Easebourne Lane, Easebourne
Construction of 20 new homes and the construction of 1500sqm of commercial buildings; including the retention of one (existing) building - SDNP/20/04751/PRE
3. Land at Egmont Road Easebourne
Construction of 20 new homes - SDNP/20/04754/PRE

Design Review Panel: Kay Brown (Chair)
Chris Blandford
William Hardie
Maria Hawton-Mead

SDNPA officers in attendance: Naomi Langford (Major Projects Officer)
Mark Waller-Gutierrez (Specialist Lead)
Tania Hunt (Support Services Officer)

SDNPA officers observing: Jody Blake (Conservation Officer)
Ruth Childs (Landscape Officer)

Item presented by Dominic Chapman – JTP
Chara Iacovidou – JTP
Nicola De Quincey – Nicola De Quincey Architecture and Conservation
Lionel Fanshawe – Terra Firma Consultancy Ltd
Jacob Goodenough - Nova Planning Ltd

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, nor is it a substitute for local authority design, landscape advice and 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.

Summary

On behalf of the South Downs National Park, I would like to thank you for bringing your proposal to the Design Review Panel. We are incredibly grateful to review a proposal so early in the design process. We would like to thank you and your design team for their presentation and the supporting information you provided to us; it created numerous points for discussion and generated some interesting ideas during the session.

Overall, we support your approach: the vision needs to be developed further for each of the sites, with comments from the community consultation feeding into this. This will help in taking the vision through to what the unique qualities each of these places are going to offer once developed. It was felt that the Panel were not yet in a position to make comments on the architectural forms.

A brief summary of all of the sites can be found below:

The Former School

- The relationship to the housing to the N/E of the site.
- Sections through the site, to help inform the development of the proposals.
- The housing to the south; particularly where it fronts on to the open space; its relationship with the open space; what you want to happen with this open space should help inform its design.
- The view, particularly from the north over the space, the housing receding into the landscape.
- Develop the landscape and how the community will use these spaces.

Cowdray Works Yard

- Retaining the views across the site and out to the historic parkland and the downs.
- Improving the permeability.
- Servicing of the commercial elements, how this will work and the relationship between that and the residential area.
- Retention of historic assets, particularly on the eastern boundary.
- Potential to use scale of existing building on the southern boundary. Perhaps this can be used to provide the numbers needed on the site whilst retaining the historic assets.

Egmont Road

- Breaking up frontage and setting back, changing style of the form of the terraces.
- Breathing space to the field boundary, with space either side.
- Relationship of the apartment block, this needs to be sensitively handled.

Vision

The vision is still quite generic. It focuses on all 3 sites together, rather than individually. This needs developing further for each individual site, using that vision to develop that spirit of place for each sites, with its own unique qualities. What do you want each of these places to look and feel like? What makes them unique in character and special? How does each site relate to surrounding areas? Consider how views (outwards, inwards and within and across each site) and the sequential views opening up as someone walks through each site, how these connect with the wider landscape and help shape the vision for each site. Once this is developed further there will be more of a richness coming through in the design.

Vision of Former School Site

- 3 distinctive areas.
- South – The Panel were concerned about what the character is, and what is it informed by? Quite suburban. More needs to be done as the vision not clear, particularly with the houses facing the open space.
- Open space - what is the function of this area? How does this inform how the built form relates to this? Community orchard could be more of a feature of the open space.
- Views from the fields and PROW path looking toward The Race. The development here could be open.
- The character of this edge of settlement is hidden by trees and hedges, how is this incorporated into the landscape and part of the wider landscape setting?

Vision of Cowdray Works Yard

- Important connection with East views and the avenue of large conifer trees on the horizon and the historic parkland. The currently proposed two houses block this important view to the east.
- Southern views of the downs needs to be retained.
- A strong hierarchy of scale and visual linking exists for the 4 storey priory building, down to the large timber workshop, small outhouse and the attractive stone wall on the parkland boundary. This relationship is important. The outhouse and stone wall that extends along the south eastern boundary should be retained and integrated into the development.
- The large building on the southern boundary in the middle of the site has distinctive, historic, industrial character and rich detailing. These are very strong characteristics it would be beneficial to retain. The successful precedent of such a large scale of building existing in this location could also inform the design.
- Access through the site to service the Cowdray Yard is taking up a lot of land and a more efficient way to do this should be further explored.
- Is the red line in the right place? What is planned for the Cowdray Yard outside the red line needs to inform the development design.
- How the Cowdray Yard is brought through into the development, encouraging pedestrian access should be explored.

Vision of Egmont Road

- Sense of place in the centre of the site – feels rural, hedgerow, sense of tranquillity, birds singing and expanse of sky. How will this be captured in the new development?
- How the field boundary manifests itself with the design as it moves forward?
- The relationship with the old houses on the east of the site and north side of the site and the relationship with the flats. Size and mass and bulk of form in relationship with the existing residential areas.

Notes

Key points from the discussion on **Former School Site**

- Character of the central space – views of both ends of the sites from the open central space. Tree planting a softener, look at the function of this space. Whilst a gentle slope, it would be useful to see the scale of this slope with a section across it.
- N/E boundary; group of houses exposed to views from development the other side of the field. Development proposed here is very tight up against the countryside boundary.
- There is an unacceptably suburban nature to the 4 houses fronting onto the open space. The natural development of the village would not be a group of farmhouses close to each other. The strong corner house at number 1, fronting onto the road is appropriate and the Panel approved of this positioning. The houses behind do not quite work partly because they are too similar in scale and appearance. A hierarchy with a range of scale and form to these properties would be preferable and possibly one or two properties should sit back and recede into the landscape. The views from the north need to be considered in this arrangement. The relationship between the space and these houses needs to be explored further.
- The houses facing south should make use of passive solar gain for living space.
- Start to consider the energy strategy. How are you going to meet heating and hot water needs? Communal plant rooms needed? Where would this be located? Possibility of green roofs covering the bin and bike stores.
- The school site with 2 blocks of 2 houses is quite tight in space, considering bike stores and bin stores need to be introduced.
- How do the two houses on the N/E of the site facing the open space respond to the sloping site?
- Consider view from road up the pedestrian link (14) up to the development beyond (7), currently view appears to be of a carport. Similarly consider how 4th house (11) fronting the green is seen from the entrance to the site.

Key points from the discussion on **Cowdray Works Yard**

- Main concern is retaining the industrial character and the sensitive boundary on the S/E of the site.
- Access;
 - 1) The service road will take down the small ancillary building, stone wall and a tree, which would destroy the built heritage and have significant negative visual impacts on this sensitive boundary and on the character of the parkland. The Panel thought it would be worth revisiting this and looking at alternatives. Perhaps commercial traffic could use the plaza area as a shared space and be managed? This type of approach is used very successfully elsewhere. The proposed commercial access, as it is, was thought by the Panel to disrupt the historic fabric of the site.
 - 2) Pedestrian access is a big offer to the village. The views towards the S/W from commercial area and S/E from Easebourne Lane towards woodland/ Cowdray Estate, are not retained or celebrated with the pinch point space between the two houses proposed in the SE corner. The space between these buildings was thought by the Panel to be too tight and not encouraging pedestrian access through the site.
- Views;
 - 1) Reconsider views through the site and beyond into the wider landscape and sequential views as someone walks into and through the site. Do views connect with and terminate in the wider landscape; the Estate conifers to the east, the Downs to the south, the Priory to the north. How are views terminated within the site? Remove pinchpoints and views that might be closed down by parked cars / car ports etc.
 - 2) View from existing workshop and the barn to the west. Glimpsed view looking S/W from the commercial yard. This view needs to be retained and enhanced, but this is blocked by the proposed house in the southern corner.
- Existing workshop on S/W boundary could be converted and reused for the development, as it has great character and rich detailing with gardens looking N/W and S/E.
- The scale of the existing workshop was not seen to be out of place by the Panel and therefore this could be helpful with a reconfiguration of units on the site.
- Live/Work spaces – the ambience and the relationship between the 2 sites needs to be fed through site. The scale of the workshop could lend itself to this.
- To help better integrate the Cowdray Yard with the development, a consistent surface treatment could be considered.
- Current mix of surface treatment complex consider simplifying and using to encourage pedestrian access.

Key points from the discussion on **Egmont Road**

- The Panel were pleased that the masterplan has moved to the terrace housing arrangement. The regularity of terraces was questioned. Could this be broken up and set back, so not in a straight line? The higgledy piggledy character of the roofscape of the older houses could be explored and reflected into this site.
- Possible over-large scale of the block of flats is a concern. Perhaps look at adjacent roof character precedents to explore ways of breaking up the perception of mass? Might the flats be better located on the southern end of the site?
- Field boundary compromise does not quite work; there are no spaces between houses to the north or the south of this boundary and so the incorporation of this boundary is rather tokenistic. There may be the need to lose a property to create more 'breathing space' to appreciate it properly. This will help create greater variation in the form and setting back of the remaining properties.
- The Panel discussed a desire for a pedestrian connection through to the north.
- The Panel discussed if the blacktop was appropriate and the possibility of a more rural material?
- Maximise eastern side of the site for community use. There is a danger that this area can become too 'bitsy' if made any smaller.
- Amenity space for the flats needs to be considered. Only green space currently is quite northerly.
- Passive House Energy Consultant – It was thought that an energy consultant would help at this stage. The form of the terraces and green roofs is great but the 'L' shape will make it difficult to achieve the passive house standard for the whole building envelope. Need reassurance in reaching the target with this form.
- The energy strategy to meet hot water and heating needs to be considered at this stage.
- Modelling in the Passive House Planning package software may show some unacceptable overheating which could be eliminated with solar shading.
- Bin/Bike storage – tight space on the front of the buildings. Need more space here for storage and perhaps garden.