

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting:	17 November 2021
Site:	Garston Farm, East Meon SDNP/21/02888/FUL
Panel members (DRP):	Mark Penfold (Chair) Kay Brown Andy Clemas Adam Richards Maria Hawton-Mead (not in person, written advice provided) Andrew Smith
SDNPA officers in attendance:	Rafa Grosso-Macpherson (Design Officer) Mark Waller-Gutierrez (SDNPA Specialist Lead) Tania Hunt (SDNPA Support Services Officer)
EHDC officer in attendance:	Katherine Pang (Principal Planning Officer)
Applicant and Project Team:	Rob Hall (Architectural Home) Richard Brown (Principle Land Owner)
Observers:	Steven Ridgeon (Chair of the Planning Committee at East Meon Parish Council)
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 and landscape skills or community engagement

The Panel's response to your scheme will be placed on the Planning Authority's website where the public can view it.

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.

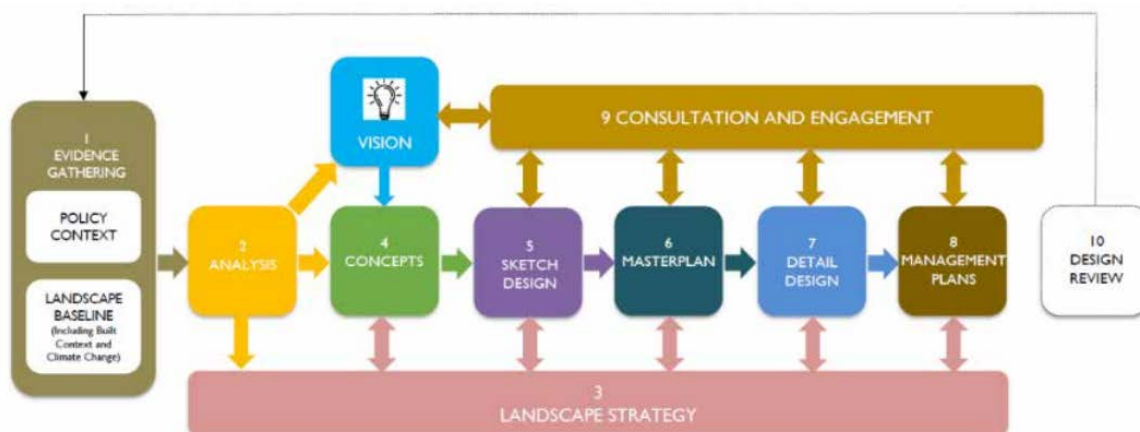
Summary

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 and look forward to participating in further DRP sessions in the future.

We would like to thank you and the applicant 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.

The Panel felt that clearly this site should be developed. However, the scheme presented did not convey a narrative that demonstrated a baseline analysis of the landscape and architecture for the site, which needs to go hand in hand to justify such a development. The scheme needs to come with clear evidence demonstrating this analysis has been done. It was felt insufficient evidence to produce a design where unfortunately the massing, composition and detailing appears somewhat crude and does not seem to be informed by a 'designer's eye. Miscellaneous elements from 'traditional' buildings in large, boxy forms in a suburban 'cul-de-sac' arrangement appearing to be selected at random from previous single dwelling developments approved in the National Park, cannot be justified on this basis. There was also a concern from the panel regarding the large size of the properties in the application. The Panel asked about the floor space of dwellings. The East Meon Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) states that there is a great demand for smaller houses for downsizing and young families, and this scheme does not deliver these. Overall, the panel felt that the current application was going in the wrong direction and unlikely to make a positive contribution to the character of East Meon. The scheme needs to show evidence of analysis of the characteristic of the site, responding also to the South Downs National Park Local Plan, East Hampshire Local Plan and their requirements for net zero carbon, along with the advice from the original pre-application.

The Panel recommends the project team to follow the design process as set out in the South Downs Local Plan and the draft Design Guide SPD, the landscape-led approach to design. This is outlined in the diagram below. The aspects of landscape that should be considered when designing a development proposal should include: topography, views, local farmstead character, historic road character, dark skies, etc. Any design should broadly respond to the illustrative layout in the NDP as well.



Landscape

- Consider how the buildings sit within the landscape, how the spaces between the buildings work and how the views work from looking in and out.
- Hedges – There was concern regarding the access and the loss of the established hedgerow for visibility. The hedgerow currently sets the character of the road.
- Access point – Concern with the loss and changes to ground level on the proposed access, as there is an approximate 1 metre change in levels from road to site.
- Is the access road's width appropriate to its context? It should be narrower than the main road.
- Access – There was concern regarding vehicle turning within the access/driveway of plots 4 and 5, it appears tight.
- The landscape appraisal seems disconnected and hasn't influenced the design. The appraisal lists the specific area in which the site sits, with reference to materiality of flint, brick, clay and thatch (an extract from East Hants Characteristics) - giving precedent images – none of these relate to one another. There is an architectural richness in the village, but there is no reference to East Meon in the proposed design.
- Farmyard Typology – Both the NDP and pre-application advice letter encourage a farmyard typology – how does this reflect the shared spaces between the houses – how does this reflect the architectural character- how does the relationship of the spaces between the buildings reflect this typology – how does the presence of the scheme within the wider landscape reflect this typology? Locally characteristic farmsteads should be understood, and their parameters influence any design.
- Central yard is not functioning as a shared space nor is multifunctional. Seating, play area? Is the use of gates and fencing necessary? These do not fit with the farmyard typology nor encourage a community spirit. Close boarded fencing is not an appropriate in this context, particularly fronting the shared area; brick or flint walls should be considered instead. How will waste storage be accommodated so as not to dominate the shared space?

Sustainability

- Passive solar gain – the homes need to use passive solar gain to contribute to heating and incorporating external solar shading.
- Heating system – consider what renewable heating systems are going to be used and where the plant will be positioned.
- Photovoltaic panels to be positioned on the roof slopes and these should be shown on the plans.
- Ventilation strategy. This needs to be shown on the plans and with the position of the equipment.
- Surface area. The current surface area of the homes is large relative to volume, which will increase heat loss. A design with a lower surface area should be considered that is incorporated in a simple build form and roofs that are orientated and designed to take photovoltaic panels. Using integrated garages, dormer windows, and projecting gables with utility rooms does not help the form factor.
- Passive house standard - What is the energy strategy for the site? What is the target for kWh/m²? What fabric U values, airtightness and thermal bridging levels will be considered? Consider a simpler design form.
- Climate crisis and increasing fuel prices - these homes must be affordable to run and the site needs to be zero carbon. Include solar shading, overhanging eaves, resilient material and enlarged gutters for our future climate.
- Waste storage, bike storage, electric car charging points all need to be shown on the plans. Can communal external shaded seating/play areas be incorporated to encourage a community spirit on the site?
- Consider employing an energy and sustainability consultant.

Design

- Has the re-orientation of plots 4 and 5 been considered? There is a pattern for houses fronting the road.
- Precedence of local area not relating to current scheme. Need to see evidence through examples regarding to design, buildings, materials and sense of place.
- 21C design which reflects bulk, form, scale, materiality and design responding to current issues.
- Orientation of houses for Passive House standard design.
- Floor area – there was concern regarding the floor area of the houses being too large. These properties should follow the neighbourhood plan which requires smaller houses.
- Will the design of the dwellings and their boundary treatment, particularly dwelling 1, 2 and 3, provide some areas of shelter from winds that will sweep up the valley from the north?
- Passive House standard design. Simpler design for energy efficiency.
- Consider plant room location within the scheme.
- Materials - Has off site manufacturing been considered with a timber frame? Will all the materials be sourced locally?
- Generic suburban houses. How do they respond to the special qualities of the National Park?