

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting:	17 November 2021
Site:	Lewes Bus Station SDNP/21/03284/PRE
Panel members (DRP):	Mark Penfold (Chair) Kay Brown Andy Clemas Adam Richards Maria Hawton-Mead Andrew Smith
SDNPA officers in attendance:	Rafa Grosso-Macpherson (Design Officer) Mark Waller-Gutierrez (SDNPA Specialist Lead) Tania Hunt (SDNPA Support Services Officer) Kelly Porter (SDNPA Major Projects Lead)
Applicant and Project Team:	Amanda Vint (Generator) Paul Fender (ECE) Nick Francis (ECE) Paul Zara (Paul Zara Architects) Paul Burgess (Lewes Planning)
Observers:	None
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 early in the process 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 responded very positive regarding the scheme and felt that all the right criteria was informing the design process and coming into the scheme. The panel considered if there was too much bulk on the site and how this affects the views from the buildings within the conservation area, the views beyond towards the Downs and the shading towards the public realm. The bulk and scale of the scheme needs to be considered, and how it relates and comes together. However, the panel welcomed the formation of an implied 'public square' and the subtle way that the alternating gables helped to reinforce the presence of this 'square'. These gables also successfully give character to the development as a whole – and this might justify their height, provided their impact is not undermined by the 'infill' elements of the design next to the site - which may need to drop in height. Doing this would give the development greater legibility within the wider townscape (especially when seen from higher in the town). The elevations might benefit from design development to give them greater formal presence. The design now needs to be tested to see how it responds to all these points. The panel would also encourage the scheme to be net zero carbon.

Landscape

- Consider extending public realm to the north, where the road joins the causeway, the linking of the development around these areas and how this integrates all together with the town. Also, consider the area in front of the church. There is an opportunity for public realm connectivity with new developments nearby. Dialogue should take place with other stakeholders and project teams.
- Views – impact of the views on the Downs beyond. The bulk and scale of the buildings can block this view of the Downs from the town centre, which is characteristic of Lewes.
- Consider the cumulative impacts of the development with the emerging development from the Phoenix North Quarter and adjacent Eastgate Area and how these works together.
- Building height - The height of the buildings onto Eastgate Street will be overbearing and will not fall with the landscape. They will shade the surrounding external areas and buildings. A shading analysis with sun path is recommended.
- The Panel would welcome illustration showing the progression from the current to the proposed character – views from Eastgate Street, Eastgate Wharf and the High Street. In essence the images as presented with the current image also shown. This will allow a clearer understanding of the visual evolution of the scheme.
- Biodiversity net gain – team to clarify how requirements of BNG will be met.

Sustainability

- Bus Transportation - A master plan for transport/services and energy is recommended for the development of the local sites: Bus station, Pheonix North Quarter, Wemban Smith and Waitrose.
- Energy strategy - Can this be expressed in kWh/m2. Zero carbon is recommended in this climate crisis and to make the buildings affordable to run. What fabric levels will be achieved? What airtightness? What thermal bridging level? Passive House standards and certifications are recommended to reach zero carbon targets.

- Daylight/ Shading analysis – with regard to the recessed balconies. How much sunshine and daylight do the flats get?
- Passive House Design/ Climate Change - Has passive solar design been incorporated with solar shading for flats and houses? Has design for our future climate been incorporated e.g. solar shading, overhanging eaves, resilient material and enlarged gutters?
- Sustainable design - Plant room - Communal or individual? Has a communal heating system been considered across all the local development sites? What renewable heating system? Plans need to show all the required plant (e.g plant rooms, heat pumps, water tanks etc.), wet rooms should all be stacked to minimise pipe runs.
- The size of the photovoltaic panel arrays needs to be confirmed and how they contribute to the zero carbon target. Good to have flat roofs allowing southerly orientations of panels.
- Passive House certification will only be achieved with MVHR. Passive stack ventilation is shown in a diagram and MVHR is mentioned. Natural cross ventilation is recommended for all dwelling units. Waste stores need to be shown. How many bike racks? Incorporate shared car spaces? How will resident compost food? Has the dark night sky policy been taken into account? How will artificial light be eliminated at night? A surface water analysis should be undertaken to ensure that the site will not flood, trap water running off from higher areas and be resilient to our changing climate for the next 100 years.

Design

- What are the expectations for tree planting? Plan well services to avoid conflict between underground services and planting. Plan tree pits in advance.
- Building height - The height takes the tall spire of the next-door church and the roof of the Premier Inn as the guides for overall height for the site. These heights seem inappropriate leads.
- The bulk between gables should be reduced.
- The three options showcased at the DRP session varied in the articulation of elevations. A consistent approach to the fenestration and recessed balconies should be taken. Cues should be taken from the Church and the character of other buildings in the vicinity which have 'punched' openings and deep reveals, positioned in an ordered and not 'hit and miss' fashion.
- Some openings are omitted in later options, which could erode the elevation quality.
- Commercial space - What is the proposed use of the commercial space? Can maker spaces/cafes/external seating areas be considered?
- Material use and their colour – will have a significant impact on how the scheme will look – also consider climate change and how these materials will weather.
- Local materials - What method of construction? Can timber frame be considered and local sustainable materials? Has off site construction be considered?
- Spaces - Will there be communal external spaces? How will upper terraces be used?