

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting:	22 nd February 2022
Site:	Kings Ride Farm, Alfriston, East Sussex
Panel members (DRP):	Mark Penfold (Chair) Maria Hawton-Mead Steven Bee William Hardie
SDNPA officers in attendance:	Katie Sharp (Case Officer) Ruth Childs (Landscape Officer) Mark Waller-Gutierrez (Specialist Lead)
Applicant and Project Team:	Chris Wojtulewski (Parker Dann) Andrew Goodwin (Mackellar Schwerdt Architects) Stephen Carr (Site Owner)
Observers:	Tania Hunt (Support Services Officer) Sabrina Robinson (Senior DM Officer)
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

We would like to thank you and the applicant team for attending the workshop, it created numerous points for discussion and generated some interesting ideas during the session. The DRP were unanimous in their opinion that the ambitions of the project are commendable and we all look forward to working with you to develop the practical implementation of them.

The site is quite complex due to its topography, both within the site and around the site. The site is also on the edge of a suburban estate, and although the panel did not expect the suburban estate to be a precedent for the site, the surrounding landscape, the South Downs Way and the views, both inward and outward should all have a positive effect of how this site is developed. The panel also felt that the existing buildings sit very well within the site in terms of colour, form, shape and scale. Therefore, the panel agreed that the basic approach to the layout being developed is the right approach, but felt that there are elements that will need to be refined. Paying particular attention to the edges, the area in the middle of the site and the form of the buildings, which would all benefit from enhancement to allow for the surrounding landscape, the views and the spaces in and around the buildings.

Landscape/ Topography

- Western corner from the South Downs Way could be opened up, creating framed views of the Downs beyond.
- Reducing the height of the building on the western edge to allow for views in and out.
- Views to the east of downs arguably superior and should also be accommodated in the design.

Sustainability

- Resilience for future climate
 - Flood potential with runoff from higher areas. Consider how this will be dealt with? Will swales be needed in the fields on the western boundary? How will drainage on the site be dealt with?
 - Materials need to be weather resilient. Consider overhanging eaves and enlarged gutters.
 - Allow for passive solar gain so the sun can heat the spaces within the building, considering orientation of the buildings to maximise this.
- Will there be communal energy provision? If so, consider location of plant room, either within the community or in individual homes. Ground source and air source electric heating systems should be considered.
- Where would solar panels be effectively positioned on roof slopes?
- Balconies could be considered to create solar shading and private outside space.
- Informal central courtyard community space for wellbeing, leisure, growing, secure play and amenity space, not dominated by cars and roads.
- Consider energy affordability. Zero carbon energy targets are welcomed along with fabric standards to meet Passive House levels.

Design

- Existing buildings - the silvered timber on the western elevation and the lower/softer pitch roof form works really well in the landscape and this character could usefully be repeated in the building design.
- Northern block could be moved further toward the road, making the corner a prominent feature on the approach to the footpath, and creating a lovely landmark agricultural building that draws the eye as you approach along Kings Ride. If this building was deeper, the cars could be doubled stacked allowing 2 cars per property. This in turn would release space within the courtyard, currently over dominated by cars and access for them.
- Corner where N and W buildings meet could be a very attractive feature and should allow for views from the site to hills to east. Either a gap in the buildings or a drop in the roof at this point.

- South Eastern block appears too big and quite cramped. Consider how it relates to the rest of the site and its surroundings, in terms of bulk and scale and the landscape views in and out. This block is also taking views away from the rest of the site and the neighbouring bungalow, which needs further consideration. This block may need to become single storey.
- Unvaried ridge on the W building could respond better to the surrounding landscape with variation in the height.
- Informal courtyard space for parking or dropping off before parking in car barn would provide opportunity for character of a working yard.
- Reducing garden space on the western edge, allowing for small courtyard gardens. This would create larger central community space potential with an emphasis on an element of shared leisure/play/growing space and some shared facilities (trampoline, barbecue, seating etc.).
- Consider balconies on buildings on the western edge facing inwards toward the courtyard, to allow for additional semi-private space to compensate for smaller gardens.
- Simplify materials with materials found within the landscape. Silver/ grey with perhaps stone and brick at low level. Timber open boarding works well on existing barn
- The frequent vertical material changes in the elevations does not appear to work. Material changes that stress the horizontal would reduce the perception of height, and mass.
- Consider opened timber fencing on gardens to allow views out with vertical timber on upper floors to reduce reflection
- Sliding screens across windows would make it easier to achieve barn-like forms.
- Creation of bin pick up storage area in north eastern corner, perhaps in car barn, allowing direct collection from the road side, would reduce the need for bin lorry access to the site.
- Further consideration needed regarding the 4 bed, 3 story unit which is much too high. A landmark type structure could work here, but it needs to be really well considered with how it sits within the landscape. Also consider how this build could enhance that landscape and its views.

Going Forward

- Look at precedent studies of similar builds and how they work well – look at Adam Richard’s Ditching Museum, for how roofs are treated and for detailing.
- Reiterate the landscape strategy, the views and the macro landscape - how the wider landscape runs into the site and how this is being maximised, presenting how the site will look with these views into and out.
- L-shape – getting close, but needs refinement and thought with the junction between and its bulk, scale and length.
- Consider potential for an L-Shape arrangement in the SE corner with potential for an opening to the south for views and light to the communal area.
- The courtyard needs to be less suburban in its arrangement, simpler and less dominated by cars and internal roads.
- Consider undertaking an overheating analysis as there is concern that the units with roof lights, and no shading to fenestration, will overheat in our future climate. Consider removing roof lights and adding solar shading,
- Consider using mechanical ventilation with heat recovery in all units. Analysis to make sure the building design, ventilation system and e.g. heat recovery, is sufficient to prevent overheating, especially considering the amount of roof lights within the build (also a potential dark night skies concern. Consider the effects of fenestration on the dark night skies).
- Consider solar panels for the energy supply for lighting communal parking area for bikes and cars.
- Consider stacking wet room to minimise pipe runs to enhance energy efficiency.

- A reduction by a couple of units may be needed.
- The panel were encouraged that the units were spacious, but that the size of the units may affect the affordability for those renting or buying.
- An option for consideration would be introduce a terrace running along the southern boundary of the site. This will open up the views and allow these units to be positioned well for passive solar gain and solar panels.
- Consider the NE corner, the current awkwardness of the meeting of these buildings as could be an opportunity for something special. There is an opportunity for exploring both a land mark corner and a potential view but the corner development should take precedence.
- It would be helpful to see how a terrace along the south rather than the east boundary might work.