

The Design Review Panel

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| Site | Lilley Brook House, Charlton Hill, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL53 9NE |
| Proposal | New isolated Paragraph 80 dwelling and associated estate management building set within a 23-acre site |
| Local Authority | Cheltenham Borough Council |
| Applicant | Huw & Susan Evans |
| Agent | Evans Jones |
| Architect | Hawkes Architecture |
| Landscape Architect | Davies Landscape Architect |
| Review Date | 12 th October 2021 |

This design review panel session was booked by Hawkes Architecture. The session included an in-person site visit, which it is considered has been essential in understanding the site and its setting.

The information submitted for review is considered to be extremely clear, comprehensive, and professional; this is welcomed by the Panel. It is felt that this presentation material is of benefit to the design review process. The multidisciplinary approach is also supported, as is the client's engagement with the Panel.

The Panel has been asked to comment on the proposals against the requirements of paragraph 80 (e) (previously 79 (e)) of the National Planning Policy Framework, (NPPF), which states: -

Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:

(e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:

- is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and***
- would significantly enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.***

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Paragraph 133 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states: -

“Local planning authorities should ensure that they have access to, and make appropriate use of, tools and processes for assessing and improving the design of development. These include workshops to engage the local community, design advice and review arrangements, ... In assessing applications, local planning authorities should have regard to the outcome from these processes, including any recommendations made by design review panels.”

Therefore, the Panel provides the following feedback: -

It is felt that the applicant and design team have exhibited a considered and sensitive approach to produce a high-quality design proposal. Furthermore, ongoing active engagement with the design review panel process is welcomed and felt to represent best practice.

It is felt that the landscape led multidisciplinary approach has resulted in a sustainable and robust proposal. Therefore overall, it is considered that the scheme is a well-developed proposal of the highest architectural standards, representing a truly outstanding design, which also promotes high levels of sustainability. It is also considered that the proposals have demonstrated that they would significantly enhance the immediate setting and are sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area. Furthermore, it is considered that, subject to a commitment to disseminate learning outcomes, the proposals will help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas. Therefore, it is considered the proposals have met the criteria set out in paragraph 80 (e) of the NPPF.

Notwithstanding this, the below comments are made in an effort of helpfulness to the design team and applicants: -

It is considered there is a very clear, logical and coherent narrative, that has resulted from the multidisciplinary team working well together. The information provided in advance of the session was considered to have thoroughly and coherently explained the site and its setting.

Whilst the landscape design proposals are supported and the stated strategic objectives for landscape are welcomed, it is suggested it may be helpful for the landscape proposals to be clearer throughout the presentation/application information at explaining how they are meeting the specific Para 80 (e) policy requirements.

In terms of landscape character, it is noted that a lot of the historic landscape character locally is compromised, particularly as a result of the golf course. Furthermore, whilst The Dingle is considered to be a distinctive space, it is noted to host many alien plant species, and is therefore not the best example of the landscape character that is to be reinforced. It is therefore suggested it may be helpful to carry out a wider scan of the landscape character across the escarpment through the Cotswold's AONB to demonstrate what best practice would be in terms of landscape reinstatement. It is noted that there is a combination of wood and pasture, however it is still not clear what the most appropriate interface between

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the two may be. It is felt that the space created as a result of the pasture is important in terms of landscape character and it would not be appropriate to fill this with planting.

The proposed reinstatement of hedgerows and resultant redefining as well as the screening from the road is welcomed, and these aspects are considered to contribute towards demonstrating an enhancement to the immediate setting.

The visuals exploring visibility back towards the site are welcomed. However, it is suggested it would be beneficial to also provide winter views, so as to demonstrate the visuals without the foliage. The view into the site from the southwest looking down into the site entrance is considered to be particularly important. It is noted that the view towards the site access and the secondary building will be fairly visible from the top of the adjacent hill. It is considered important that the approach to the house should not feel suburban in character; to avoid any suburbanization, careful consideration should be given to the design of the entrance, security features, lighting, surfacing and the management of parked vehicles.

In terms of landscape management, it is noted that there is a very committed client, and the client's management of the site and ongoing stewardship is an important driver for the project that has strongly informed the brief and design approach undertaken. It would be beneficial for this background, and the client's aspirations in terms of ongoing landscape enhancement and management, to form a predominant part of the narrative within any future presentation or planning application documentation. The provision of a Landscape Management Plan within any planning application documentation, that commits the site owners to specific measures and enhancements to be undertaken over a 15-year period, would be a useful mechanism to demonstrate that the proposals will result in a significant enhancement to the existing landscape setting.

In terms of historical and landscape analysis, it is suggested that additional historical landscape maps that demonstrate how the landscape has changed over the last 500 years would help to give a greater historical context to the proposed landscape enhancements and show the proposals as an appropriate next step in the site's ongoing historical narrative.

The provision of the SUDS pond is welcomed; however, it is felt this element would benefit from further design development. The extensive area of site available represents an opportunity for this to be approached in a more sophisticated manner, perhaps that relates better to the form and setting of the proposed house. It is suggested that the sub spawned should not be fish stocked as, in terms of ecology, this may negatively affect the local environment and what course.

The proposed siting of the building is supported by the Panel and considered to be appropriate; the presentation is considered to have clearly and logically explained the rationale for the siting. It is noted that historically a house may have been placed at the southern end of the valley, with views across the wider site ownership. However, having carried out a site visit, the Panel notes the intricacies of the site topography and the uniqueness of the hollow (within which it is proposed to site the building), and as a result of this the proposed siting is felt to be appropriate and is supported.

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As stated above, architecturally the design proposals are supported and are considered to meet the very high bar set by paragraph 80(e) of the NPPF by reflecting the highest standards of architecture. The concept of providing 'refuge' and 'prospect', connected by the 'drum' element results in a very clear and elegant conceptual diagram, that also clearly relates to the specific site topography and landscape setting. The amount of work design evolution work and complex layering of considerations is noted by the Panel, notwithstanding this, it may be beneficial to distill the conceptual ideas into an easily presentable analogous drawing to easily demonstrate to third parties what the primary conceptual drivers are.

It may be helpful to more clearly demonstrate the detailed design regarding the boundary treatment between the parking ('turning circle') and 'level garden' located atop the 'Refuge Level'. It would also be helpful to provide additional detail in terms of the edge treatment/ balustrading along the edge of the 'Refuge Level (to provide protection from falling) would also be beneficial, as this will have a significant impact upon the appearance of the building and its relationship with the surrounding landscape.

Whilst the Panel is supportive of the proposed concept and the differences of the internal characters of the internal spaces, it is suggested it may be beneficial to provide additional fenestration to the 'Prospect' floor level along the western elevation, particularly at the top of the stair. It is felt that this would provide additional natural daylight from above into the drum, and also reinforce the narrative of end users rising up into the light. Providing views out of the building along the western elevation would enable occupants to have a sense of the building being nestled within the protective landform and provide a powerful contrast between the wonderful view to the east and the sense of being bedded in on the west. There may also be a practical benefit in providing high level fenestration along the western elevation adjacent to the kitchen area so as to provide natural daylight onto work surfaces.

The explanation of how the proposed house could be adapted to accommodate a lift to enable whole life accessibility is welcomed by the Panel. It is however suggested that it may be beneficial for this to be made more explicit within the proposed narrative and for the design team to audit the plans to ensure that appropriate accessibility widths and space standards are incorporated. It is felt that ensuring the proposed house could be adapted to provide disabled accessibility throughout is an important factor in demonstrating the highest standards of architecture.

The extremely thorough and well considered ecological/biodiversity enhancements are supported by the Panel, and these will contribute towards significantly enhancing the immediate setting. In particular, the Panel welcomes the proposal to create new and diverse grassland, however it is suggested that a seed mix should be selected based on the soil composition and chemical particulate. It may be beneficial to consider habitat creation being carried out prior to construction taking place, perhaps starting with fields and hedges to the South.

In regard to the Lilly Brook, it is suggested crayfish may be present beneficial to explore whether these are a native or invasive species. The new pool creation is welcomed; however, this should be informed by the type of crayfish present. Furthermore, the suggestion of creating wetland mosaic habitat near to the brook is welcomed and it would be beneficial to include this new habitat within the biodiversity matrix.

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It is noted that dormice are recorded within the area, however it appears there will be negligible dormouse habitat loss; the proposed new hedgerow and woodland will provide excellent enhancement in this regard, assuming an appropriate species selection.

In terms of wastewater, it is noted this may be via a package treatment plant and discharged to the ground. The additional nutrient load should be considered in terms of its impact upon the brook. If it is proposed that additional nutrients should be removed by engineered wetland, careful consideration should be given to the use of suitable planting species to match the environment. It is considered that phragmites and bullrush reeds should not be used, as if they escape the engineered area they may damage the local environment, despite being native species.

The proposed energy strategy, that includes consideration of embodied carbon, is commended, and contributes to demonstrating the highest standards of architecture. The Panel welcomes the clear comparison of the proposal against both Part L1a and the RIBA 2030 Target. Linked to this, the Panel welcomes the verbally stated aims in terms of outreach and dissemination of information on the project which will be of clear educational and public benefit. It suggested it may be beneficial to provide firm commitments as part of any planning application of how information/learning outcomes will be disseminated so as to demonstrate how the proposals will contribute towards helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS, (to be read in conjunction with the above)

In summary, the main conclusions of the Panel are: -

- The session included an in-person site visit, which it is considered has been essential in understanding the site & its setting
- The information submitted for review is considered to be extremely clear, comprehensive, & professional
- The very high bar set out within paragraph 80 (e) of the NPPF is noted
- It is considered the proposals have met the criteria set out in paragraph 80 (e) of the NPPF
- The multidisciplinary, landscape led approach is welcomed & has resulted in a clear & coherent narrative
- Whilst the landscape proposals are supported, a wider scan of the landscape character across the escarpment through the Cotswold's AONB may be beneficial in demonstrating best practice
- proposed reinstatement of hedgerows as well as the screening from the road is welcomed
- It would be beneficial to provide winter views, to demonstrate the visuals without the foliage
- It is considered important that the approach to the house should not feel suburban in character
- The client's aspirations in terms of ongoing landscape enhancement & management are welcomed, & clearer articulation of these within the project narrative may be beneficial
- The provision of a Landscape Management Plan would be beneficial
- Additional historical landscape maps may be beneficial

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- The SUDS Pond is welcomed; however, this would benefit from further design development
- The proposed siting of the building is supported by the Panel
- The proposed building is considered to reflect the highest standards of architecture
- Show the design of the boundary between the parking & 'level garden' atop the 'Refuge Level'
- Additional detail of the balustrading along the edge of the 'Refuge Level' would be beneficial
- Additional fenestration to the Prospect floor level along the western elevation may be beneficial
- Consideration of the potential for future provision of a lift is welcomed
- The well-considered ecological/biodiversity enhancements are supported by the Panel
- The suggestion of creating wetland mosaic habitat near to the brook is welcomed
- New hedgerow & woodland will provide excellent enhancement for dormice habitats
- Phragmites & bullrush reeds should not be used within any engineered wetland
- The proposed energy strategy, that includes consideration of embodied carbon, is commended,
- Provide firm commitments as part of any planning application of how information/learning outcomes will be disseminated so as to demonstrate how the proposals will contribute towards helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas

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NOTES:

Please note that the content of this document is opinion and suggestion only, given by a Panel of volunteers, and this document does not constitute professional advice. Although the applicant, design team and Local Authority may be advised by the suggestions of The Design Review Panel there is no obligation to be bound by its suggestions. It is strongly recommended that all promoters use the relevant Local Authorities pre-application advice service prior to making a planning application. Further details are available on the Council's website. Neither The Design Review Panel nor any member of the Panel accept any liability from the Local Authority, applicant or any third party in regard to the design review panel process or the content of this document, directly or indirectly, or any advice or opinions given within that process. The feedback and comments given by the Panel and its members constitutes the members individual opinions, given as suggestions, in an effort of helpfulness and do not constitute professional advice. The local planning authority and the applicants are free to respond to those opinions, or not, as they choose. The Panel members are not qualified to advise on pollution or contamination of land and will not be liable for any losses incurred by the Local Authority or any third party in respect of pollution or contamination arising out of or in connection with pollution or contamination.