

APPENDIX A

The Design Review Panel

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Site	Land at Hemhill, Staplestreet Road, Hemhill, Kent ME13 9TX
Proposal	Paragraph 79 / 131 New Dwelling Set Within An Existing Walled Garden Associated with Mount Ephraim
Local Authority	Swale Borough Council
Applicant	Mr Greg Wallis
Agent	Hughes Planning
Architect	Hawkes Architecture
Landscape Architect	Squires Young Landscape Architecture
Review Date	4 th January 2021

This remote desktop review was booked by Hawkes Architecture. This is the second time The Design Review Panel has reviewed this scheme. A previous design review panel session that included a high resolution 360-degree photographic virtual site visit was carried out on the 13th May 2020. This feedback document should be read in conjunction with the previous feedback document issued.

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 comprehensive and professional presentation material is of benefit to the design review process. The Panel supports the multidisciplinary approach undertaken by the design team.

The Panel has been asked to comment on the proposals against the requirements of paragraph 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 or innovative, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and***

APPENDIX A

The Design Review Panel

www.designreviewpanel.co.uk



- *would significantly enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area."*

The large amount of work that has been undertaken to date is acknowledged, as is the high standard of design; however, the extremely high bar that is required to meet the criteria set out for paragraph 79(e) of the NPPF is also noted.

Paragraph 129 of the 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: -

The design teams' responses to the feedback from the initial design review Panel session on 13th May 2020 is noted and welcomed; it is considered the design has improved significantly since the last design review panel session. It is felt to be helpful to review the proposals again at this stage of the design process.

Overall, the proposals work well in relation to their context; and the scale, height and massing are appropriate and also offer a strong visual response to the location. The important characteristics of the site and surroundings are clearly identified, also permeate into the design allowing the proposed dwelling and landscaping to make a positive contribution to the setting.

Notwithstanding the above, it is considered the design proposals have not yet demonstrated that they have met all of the para 79 (e) criteria, and there is felt to be a need to provide additional information and clarifications to be able to demonstrate compliance with the policy requirements. It is however considered that following further design development, that appropriately addresses the comments below, the design does have the potential to meet the requirements of para 79 (e) of the NPPF.

It is suggested it may be beneficial for any future presentation material or planning application to incorporate additional information regarding the project brief, also the applicant's specific aims and objectives.

Regarding the broad landscape strategy, it is considered The Swale Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines have been used to good effect. Furthermore, the ten points of the broad landscape strategy are supported, although they should be fully reflected in the detailed proposals.

Regarding the site strategies, the five key strategies for the walled garden are supported. The rationale behind the building location within the site is clearly explained regarding the proposed

APPENDIX A

The Design Review Panel

www.designreviewpanel.co.uk



siting of the house within the walled garden, and this is supported. The Panel welcomes the inclusion of alternative siting options for the dwelling that explores the pros and cons of each option, and this demonstrates why the proposed siting represents the most suitable option.

It is felt the analysis of local character is well considered and appropriate.

The landscape context strategy is considered to be appropriate, and the eight points of the wider landscape proposals are all supported.

With the exception of the proposed topiary, (see comments below), the revised walled garden landscape design is supported, as is the incorporation of the subtle reference to historic quadrant pattern. It is felt the relationship between character of the walled garden and its landscape context is improved, and subject to appropriate development of detailed design is considered capable of delivering a good outcome.

It is also felt the relationship between the outdoor spaces and the internal living spaces of the house are also improved and similarly, subject to appropriate development of detailed design, are capable of delivering a good outcome that would represent the highest standards of architecture.

In response to the issue previously raised regarding the relationship of the building to the existing garden walls on the east side and the narrowness of the external space, it is noted the distance between the house and the garden wall has been slightly increased, also the windows have been re-oriented. This is an improvement on the earlier proposal, and subject to detailed design of the external spaces, including sensitive lighting design, this issue is considered to be capable of satisfactory resolution.

Regarding the sculptural topiary, it is considered the suggested purple beech formal topiary forms are inappropriate and are detrimental, not only to the landscape design but also to the integrity of the scheme as a whole. In contrast to the admirable subtlety of the design references to the historic quadrant patterns, the "strong sculptural topiary forms" proposed are considered to be harsh, insensitive and unnecessary. It is felt the topiary forms may appear as alien and jarring features and would detract from the character of the historic garden walls and the character and quality of the space they define.

The space bounded by the walled gardens will be changed by the introduction of the new dwelling, however it is suggested the remainder of the space may benefit from being kept generally open, allowing the historic walls, together with the existing horticultural buildings, to provide three-dimensional structure and enclosure.

In an effort of helpfulness, it is suggested that some perimeter trees and orchard trees as indicated in the broad landscape design would be appropriate and would not compete with the dominance of the walls as the principal vertical features. Reflecting the geometric form of the new building in the layout

APPENDIX A

The Design Review Panel

www.designreviewpanel.co.uk



at ground level could be done in a subtle and appropriate manner, without introducing dominating sculptural forms. The images provided (views 4.6, 4.9 and 4.11) confirm that the proposed purple topiary appears incompatible with the character of the existing walls and with the qualities of the proposed new building.

It is suggested that the additional information listed below, (not yet seen by the Panel), should be produced and form part of any future presentation or planning application:-

- Full heritage assessment, (the reference to a 'Heritage Statement' in the documents suggests this may already be in preparation).
- Restoration plans for the existing garden walls.
- Long-term conservation management plan.
- Detailed landscape and ecological proposals.

In terms of the building design, the Panel continues to consider that the design team have developed a strong design concept, which appears both logical and an inevitable consequence of the supporting analysis. The repetition of low modular forms, which make reference to green houses and other agricultural buildings, is considered an appropriate and positive concept; the Panel continues to be supportive of the angular architectural forms that are reflective of the surrounding orchards.

Regarding the proposed roof design, the images of a card roof study are considered to be helpful in showing how the roof forms have evolved. It is felt the ridge lines that run diagonally across the rectangular volumes and sawtooth profile adds a dynamic feel, whilst retaining the repetitive nature noted in the contextual site analysis for both glasshouses and features within the local landscape. However, it is still unclear visually how the stepped roof forms will appear; that is to say some of the 3D images still seem to show these all at the same or a similar level, even though the existing garden walls are stepped. The proposed section gives a change in level between the top and bottom ridges, the extent of which is not apparent in the 3D images. It is suggested it would be beneficial for this aspect to be further considered and more clearly illustrated.

It appears from some of the visuals that the proposed roof finish has changed from slate to zinc which is supported. Whilst slate is identified as the predominant roofing material in the analysis document, the vertical lines of the joints between zinc sheets arguably relate more to greenhouse roofs, which are a clear precedent for the scheme.

Regarding ecology, the enhancements proposed continue to be supported. It is noted that the focus of the majority of the Landscape Plan within the walled garden is to provide a formal garden. However, the Panel welcomes the addition of an area of species-rich wetland planting, pond and meadow area. It is suggested it may be beneficial for native species to be used within this proposed area to maximise its benefit for biodiversity. The provision of ecological habitat enhancements in the wider area is also welcomed, as this may enable 'biodiversity net gain' to be achieved. In order to empirically prove that the walled garden and wider site would result in net gain, it is suggested a

APPENDIX A

The Design Review Panel

www.designreviewpanel.co.uk



Biodiversity Metric, (DEFRA 2.0 or updated revision), may be beneficial in supporting any future planning application.

In an effort of helpfulness, it is suggested there may be an opportunity to create additional wildlife habitats by inclusion of bat and bird boxes within the proposed building, also through creation of reptile/amphibian hibernacula within the site/adjacent areas.

It is considered the design of any external lighting should be carefully considered in order to avoid negatively impacting biodiversity, particularly bats. It may be beneficial for details of the lighting design to be included within the proposals, ideally including LUX levels to empirically demonstrate that the design would not adversely impact biodiversity. Lighting design should consider lighting intensity, height and direction.

It is noted that dormice occur in the wider area, and it is suggested it may be beneficial for a dormouse survey to be produced if any hedgerow is to be affected during the construction, in order to ensure the development includes suitable mitigation to avoid harming this species.

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

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

- The information submitted for review is clear, comprehensive, & professional.
- The design has improved significantly since the last design review panel session.
- It is helpful to review the design proposals again at this stage of the process.
- The design proposals have not yet demonstrated that they have met all of the para 79 (e) criteria.
- It is felt the design does have the potential to meet the requirements of para 79 (e) of the NPPF.
- Additional information regarding the project brief & the applicant's specific aims may be helpful.
- The 10 points of the broad landscape strategy are supported, although they should be fully reflected in the detailed proposals.
- The five key strategies for the walled garden are supported.
- The analysis of local character is well considered & appropriate.
- The landscape context strategy is considered to be appropriate & the eight points of the wider landscape proposals are all supported.
- Except for the proposed topiary, the revised walled garden landscape design is supported.
- The relationship between the outdoor spaces & the internal living spaces of the house are improved.
- The suggested purple beech formal topiary forms are inappropriate & are detrimental.
- Some perimeter trees & orchard trees may be appropriate.
- Additional information listed within the document above should be produced.

APPENDIX A

The Design Review Panel

www.designreviewpanel.co.uk



- The design represents a strong logical concept.
- It is still felt to be unclear visually how the stepped roof forms will appear.
- The use of Zinc for the roof is supported.
- A Biodiversity Metric, (DEFRA 2.0 or updated revision), may be beneficial.
- There may be an opportunity to create additional wildlife habitats by inclusion of bat & bird boxes within the proposed building & through creation of reptile/amphibian hibernacula within the site/adjacent areas.
- It may be beneficial for details of the lighting design to be included within the proposals, including LUX levels.
- It may be beneficial for a dormouse survey to be produced.

The Design Review Panel

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.