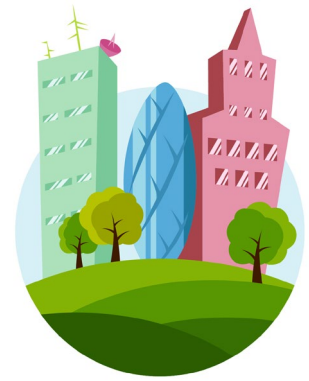


The Design Review Panel

www.designreviewpanel.co.uk



Site	Oxpens Wigginton, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX15 4JZ
Proposal	Proposed Para 79 House
Local Authority	Cherwell District Council
Applicant	Virginia Sweetingham
Agent	Hughes Planning
Architect	Seymour-Smith Architects
Landscape Architect	Seed Landscape Design
Review Date	22 nd April 2020

This remote desktop review was booked by Virginia Sweetingham, and this is the third time The Design Review Panel has reviewed this scheme. Previous sessions have been held on 15th November 2019, (including a site visit), and 13th February 2020, and this remote desktop review is provided having regard to the previous reviews and written feedback documents.

The information submitted for review is considered to be extremely clear, comprehensive, and professional; this is again 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 client's engagement with the design review process, also very clear articulation of the project brief, continues to be supported.

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: -

- a) ...
- b) ...
- c) ...
- d) ...
- e) ***the design is of exceptional quality, in that it: -***

The Design Review Panel

www.designreviewpanel.co.uk



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

It is felt that the applicant and design team have exhibited a considered approach, also a sensitive desire to produce a high-quality design proposal. Furthermore, it is felt they have engaged with sincerity in the design review panel process.

The Panel welcomes the positive response to matters raised through the review process, and it is considered that the scheme is a well-developed proposal of the highest architectural standards, representing a truly innovative design, exploring multigenerational living, 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, fitting in with the overall form and layout of the surroundings. 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.

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: -

It is felt that the proposals have clearly evolved since the previous design review panel session. The designs for the old barn and land around are an improvement upon the previous design iteration presented to the Panel. The proposed yard, and renovations to the barn, are welcomed, and it is felt that these provide a more significant entry point, and a practical way of accommodating some of the machinery and other tools etc. that will inevitably be required if the maintenance regime is to be adhered to.

Overall it is considered that the landscape proposals are of a high standard and incorporate a high level of information that clearly demonstrates compliance with the requirements of paragraph 79 (e) of the NPPF.

The external treatment is felt to be a great improvement on the previous proposals. In particular the addition of a gathering area at the end of the walkway/bridge is an improvement; it is felt that whilst a

The Design Review Panel

www.designreviewpanel.co.uk



small element, it starts to make sense of the separation, but also interdependence of the three blocks, (Virginia's, Roddy's, and Emma's).

The narrative describing the relationship between designs for the built form and landscape is considered to be much more convincing than demonstrated at the previous design review panel session. It is noted that the very naturalistic approach to the landscape, as compared to the very geometric architecture, may provide an exciting contrast between the two, and this is supported. This could allow the landscape to further develop and change over time, whilst the buildings provide a contrasting sense of stability and permanence.

The detailed analysis of the method of construction and materials used on external cladding is considered impressive. The Panel welcomes the way in which the different cladding materials are used in layers, differentiating the different parts of the buildings, and providing some very interesting elevations. It is acknowledged that it may not be practical to use timber reclaimed from the site for large parts of the building. It is however suggested that this would be desirable where possible, both in buildings and in landscape features; the use of native timber when this is impractical is commended.

Regarding trees, supplementing birch with alder is welcomed, however in a spirit of helpfulness it is noted that alder is also subject to disease like ash, and it may be beneficial to add poplar and salix to the mix in the damp woodland.

Regarding ecology, the provision and application of a biodiversity metric that demonstrates such a considerable net gain is welcomed and considered to represent a significant enhancement compared to the existing. It is felt the landscaping has demonstrated a very varied ecological value, which is also supported. In a spirit of helpfulness, it is however suggested there may be an opportunity for less generic bird and bat boxes to be incorporated, particularly in the context of such a special building and in such a special location. The bat boxes selected for trees and near woodland should be suitable for tree and woodland bat species, (such as noctule, barbastelle, and bechsteins), which are much rarer than common and soprano pipistrelle, and much more restricted in species distribution. Common and soprano pipistrelles could be accounted for in the house by providing external crevices. Bird boxes could also be more location specific, and aimed at birds which nest near water, such as dipper, wagtail, and tree roosting duck.

Notwithstanding the Panel's support for the design proposals submitted for review, the below comments are given to the applicant in a spirit of helpfulness, should they wish to further develop and enhance the architectural and landscape design of the scheme: -

It is suggested that there may be an opportunity to further explore how the geometry, that determines the form and layout of the buildings and the pathways that link them, might also be extended over time to incorporate additional structures and pathways that may become required or desired.

Notwithstanding the above, there may be an opportunity to further consider the transitional spaces between the dwellings themselves and the wider naturalistic landscape. In the landscape analysis there is a very clear red line drawn to define the domestic curtilage, and that does include a garden attached

The Design Review Panel

w w w . d e s i g n r e v i e w p a n e l . c o . u k



to Emma's house, and suggests that there is space for play equipment and vegetable growing. However, Roddy and Virginia's houses seem to be dislocated from the ground on the southern and western frontages, even though there are doors leading onto the space outside. From the information presented, it appears that neither of these houses have garden space, and although they may not wish for such at present, they or a future occupant may feel the need in future.

The external space between the buildings, (Virginia and Roddy's blocks), and the lake, has a south westerly aspect, and it can be imagined it being a place where one might want to sit. However, it is felt that it may be beneficial to further clarify how the ground plane meets the building / flows underneath in this location.

There may be an opportunity to consider how a more extensive vegetable garden, or perhaps an orchard, (if desired in future), could be placed, and how could they fit into the overall design concept. It is suggested there is an argument for a cultivated garden, or gardens, having a formal layout, and somehow being connected to the domestic realm.

It is felt that the proposed concrete footprint, by the Old Barn, may benefit from being the same material as the track; there is a concern the proposed concrete may appear out of character.

In a spirit of helpfulness, it is suggested it may be beneficial for a Lux level plan to be produced that would empirically model the impact of artificial light spill, so as to demonstrate how this will be managed to ensure there is no detrimental impact upon wildlife and habitats.

It is felt it would be beneficial to further consider the design of the block that houses the plant/utility drying rooms as well as that of the garage, as these blocks feel less developed than the rest of the proposed architecture.

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

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

- This feedback should be read in conjunction with the previous written feedback documents (15th November 2019 & 13th February 2020).
- The information submitted for review is considered to be extremely clear, comprehensive, & professional.
- The applicant & design team have engaged with sincerity in the design review panel process.
- The design is a well-developed proposal of the highest architectural standards, representing a truly innovative design, which promotes high levels of sustainability.
- The proposals have demonstrated that they would significantly enhance the immediate setting & are sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.
- Subject to a commitment to disseminate learning outcomes, the proposals will help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas.
- The external treatment is felt to be a great improvement on the previous proposals.

The Design Review Panel

w w w . d e s i g n r e v i e w p a n e l . c o . u k



- The contrast between the naturalistic approach to the landscape & geometric architecture is supported.
- The detailed analysis of the method of construction & materials used on external cladding is considered impressive.
- It may be beneficial to add poplar & salix to the mix in the damp woodland.
- The ecological proposals are considered to represent a significant enhancement.
- There may be an opportunity for less generic bird & bat boxes to be incorporated.
- There may be an opportunity to explore how pathways & links between buildings could evolve over time as needs change.
- There may be an opportunity to further consider the transitional spaces between the dwellings themselves & the wider naturalistic landscape.
- It may be beneficial to further explore the south western external space between the buildings, (Virginia & Roddy's blocks) & the lake.
- Consideration of future integration of more extensive vegetable patch, or orchard, may be desirable.
- The proposed concrete footprint by the Old Barn may benefit from being the same material as the track.
- The production of a Lux level plan may be helpful.
- It would be beneficial to further consider the design of the block that houses the plant/utility drying rooms as well as that of the garage.

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.