

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting:	25/04/2014
Site:	Phoenix Industrial Estate North Street Lewes
Proposal:	North Street Quarter Development, Lewes
Planning reference:	SDNP/13/05555/PRE
Panel members sitting:	Mark Penfold (Chair) Adam Khan Graham Morrison Duncan Baker-Brown Lionel Fanshawe Clare Coats
SDNPA officers and members:	Richard Dollamore Tim Bettany-Simmons Veronica Craddock Michael Scammell Tom Jones
Item presented by:	Clive Wilding Phillip Naylor Giles Jollands Ben Otter Rupert Grierson Stephen Adutt
Declarations of interest:	None

The Panel's response to your scheme will be placed on the Planning Authority's website where it can be viewed by the public.

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.

COMMENTS

1.0	Panel discussion
1.1 Positive elements	<p>The panel listed the following positive elements of the proposals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The first time that material had been presented that could be discussed, much has been done since it was last seen; 2. The basic structure of two main routes and the links to North Street and the Causeway; 3. The footbridge and square; 4. The provision of access to the river; 5. The general definition of 3 character areas; 6. The overall scale; 7. The overall density; 8. The incorporation of flexible workspace; 9. The idea of working yards leading to the river; 10. The principle of higher ground floors for adaptability; and 11. The potential to improve the Causeway
1.2 Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although seen four times by the panel, this was the first time that any detail had been shown. A scheme is emerging but is insufficiently developed to be fully reviewed. • An overall design strategy could not be perceived. The design has jumped from broad brush concepts to architecture and lacks a well considered site-wide masterplan. • Quality and cohesion of presentation an issue • Evident lack of coordination between designers • No up-to-date site plan showing roads and parking • Difficult to understand proposals as a whole • Presentation gave no impression of streetscapes. A detailed walk-through showing the character of individual spaces would be expected. • The designs do not reflect the description of the scheme • The strategy for contamination, and flood strategy need to be shown, including clear section drawings with height levels clearly indicated. • The provision of the affordable housing needs to be shown – location, type, quantum, mix, tenure, delivery partner • The community hub also needs to be shown in detail – including delivery / management partner.
1.3 Underground car park and parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A general weakness was identified in relation to incorporation of vehicles and parking • The panel were unconvinced by the underground car park, which was considered problematic, unsustainable and risky for Lewes. Further design resolution is required to demonstrate that this would work in terms of legibility and good urbanism above and below ground. • The presentation gave no information on important issues such as quality of experience, light, ventilation, access cores, security and safety, legibility, incorporation of utilities, management, maintenance, control of access, route-finding to places above,

	<p>adaptability or how tree planting and drainage would be incorporated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There would be confusion in relation to parking within the streets, particularly for visitors. People will want to park near their homes. Questions were raised as to the approach to splitting the tenures of houses to incorporate spaces within the car park. • An underground car park is inflexible and cannot adapt if it is found not to work or if circumstances change. Redeveloping would require compulsory purchase and comprehensive redevelopment. • Design proposals were schematic, lacking conviction, with many issues not tackled. It needs to be done with absolute conviction if to be successful. • The motivation for an underground public car park was understood but not entirely accepted. An underground car park need not include private parking, which could be accommodated on the surface. Lewes may have an issue with narrow streets and parking but on-street parking should be considered positively. People will want to park close to their homes. • Smaller underground car parks, under groups of buildings, are usual and would address the issues of legibility and adaptability whilst being more easily managed. • Building traditional streets on a deck was thought to be inauthentic. • Entrances to car parks should not detract from streets. • Multi-storey car parks can be done well, involving investment in the elevation and public functions on ground and top floors. A multi-storey car park, like a Thomas Telford warehouse, is adaptable. The Birds Porchmouth Russum one in Chichester was cited as a good example; the National Theatre car park as a warning.
<p>1.4 Consultation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The undeveloped state of the proposals indicates that further public consultation is necessary.
<p>1.5 Streetscape and urban structure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The two strong structuring routes were weakened by the proposed urban structure surrounding them, which lacks hierarchy, simplicity, clarity, coherence and sensitivity; in contrast with the character of Cliffe, Pells etc. • Excessive fragmentation is undesirable and results in a poorly defined sense of place characterised by: a lack of a coherent street pattern, legibility, definition, hierarchy, navigability and a predominance of roads. • No benefit is evident from inventing unconventional typologies. • Streets lack definition and have too little enclosure or consistency of frontage. • Street patterns, street types and character should be governed by a clear hierarchical structure. Such a structure would enable the site to be divided into manageable components and coordinated through the Design Code. • Streets and the public realm have not been designed as coherent linking spaces in their own right. As proposed they merely divide one place from another.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design of the public realm has been distracted by a focus on architecture. • A more confident, direct approach streetscape might reveal the place's inherent character. • It could be helpful to consider a series of vistas within the streetscape. • A series of terraces perpendicular to the principal spine road would appear logical. • The spine road ends as a cul-de-sac by the Pells but this is not indicated by the junction with North Street.
1.6 Fronts and backs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design confuses fronts and backs. Buildings should present their fronts to streets. Entering buildings from a semi-private courtyard inverts the characteristic building typology and creates faceless buildings. • Buildings should not face the backs of other buildings. • Generating unnecessary complexity undermines its legibility and credibility. Unnecessary complexity also reduces efficiency, thereby allowing fewer units.
1.7 Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear what is informing the characterisation of the site, as a whole and in parts. • No defined sense of place. • Piecemeal quality.
1.8 Water and wetland edges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confused and unrefined relationship with river • Does not differentiate edge conditions. • Relationship with river would benefit from greater directness. • The riverside walk and landscape bank lacks character and the quality of experience appears ill considered. It should be designed as a space and a route. • Wharf-type buildings should be built right up to the river. The edge should be tough and straightforward. The river edge walk could pass through arcades in wharf-type buildings. • The qualities of urban spaces do not respond to the conditions of the estuary, the wetland and the lido and what it would be like to live next to these.
1.9 Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some positive design features were recognised but it was noted that these do not derive from characteristics of Lewes. • The fragmented approach to the water features was considered to lack conviction. • Questions were raised as to how trees and surface water drainage would be incorporated in the capping layer and deck.
1.10 Causeway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Causeway proposal still served to divide rather than unite. It is essential to consider the Waitrose site when assessing the design of this space. • The design needs further work to convince of the merits of shared space.
1.11 Building and spatial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No strategy for defining building types was discernible. A strategy for informing the identity of the development is required. Other

<p>types</p>	<p>areas of Lewes have a recognisable character.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The building elevations are weak, unattractive, unusual and less successful than Lewes' existing elevations that they were compared to. • The range of spatial and building types was considered excessively varied, lacking hierarchy; arbitrary with no coherent character. • Houses adjacent to Green Wall, referred to as a design precedent, were considered atypical.
<p>1.12 Re-use and mixed-use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An evidential assessment of the existing buildings and uses needs to be made in order to inform the development strategy (with regards to heritage assets, sustainability, town centre economic and social vitality) • It would be more sustainable to re-use some of the existing structures on the site. • It was thought that there might be greater potential to retain the site's existing occupants, identity, businesses and uses. • A strategy is required for incorporating mixed-use across the whole site.
<p>1.13 Summary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive that there is material for the panel to consider; • In order to provide a fuller design review there is a need for a better quality of presentation with more clearly explained proposals showing a finer grain of detail of how the scheme is put together, its materials and character; • No overall design strategy was evident; • Unconvinced by the underground car park; • Confused street pattern, building orientation, landscape and building design; • Poorly defined character and sense of place; • The Causeway space needs to be designed holistically; • Existing buildings and uses should be properly appraised within the mixed use strategy; • Design quality inadequate for this important site • An ambitious, well-informed proposal is required. • Much work needs to be done to develop the scheme. • More design review sessions are necessary.