

Notes of Mid Sussex Design Review Panel – 15 July 2026

Present: Mark Folkes (Chair), Jake White (Vice-Chair), Gavin Sargent, Phil Winch

Apologies: Alice-Rose Hoile (NB. written comments sent subsequently and reproduced below), Cllr Graham Casella

In attendance: Anna Kramarczyk (MSDC Urban Designer), Andy Watt (Senior Planning Officer)

Land at Caldyne Park (The Hide), Wallage Lane, Rowfant

Description of Scheme

New dwelling on brownfield land of an outstanding or innovative design which promotes high levels of sustainability under para 84 of the NPPF (Full planning application DM/26/1220) (Previously considered by the Panel on 20 July 2021, 11 July 2023 and 22 Jan 2025)

Presenters

Architect/Designers: Conrad Howard, Harry Horwood (DD Architects)
Landscape Architect: Nick Dexter (Nicholas Dexter Landscape)
Developer: Messrs Williams, Jacobs and Hooper

In attendance

Ward Councillor: Cllr Christopher Phillips
Case Officer: Caroline Grist

The Panel's Comments

The Panel commended a great presentation. Significant improvements have been made in response to the previous Panel presentation, and the project has progressed well. The concept remains strong.

Internal layout

Although the interior design is beginning to reflect the concept, the radial ray charred timber walls have not been sufficiently carried through into the internal spaces. It is important that the design concept is consistently expressed throughout the building.

- The Panel questioned the radial design and consequent room shape. Quirky room shapes are interesting and unusual angles are often dealt with by inseting furniture such as beds within the room or building wall casings to 'square spaces', but this is not shown well for any of the bedrooms – en suites and dressing rooms are also poorly laid out.
- Although the floorplan is relatively deep, there appears to be sufficient fenestration within the building envelope to provide good levels of natural light.
- That said, it is unlikely that the rooflight over the kitchen will provide enough light to adjoining spaces. It could be larger and may be an interesting feature as a tower light instead.
- The circulation routes are unclear in their design clarity and the lift is unlikely to work in its current position
- The garage access and layout is contrived and would be extraordinarily expensive to provide for only two car spaces.

- The Panel queried the means of escape from the lower ground floor in terms of the escape route distances being quite long.
- A route to compliance statement / evidence / assurance of compliance with Part M given the changes in level throughout.

Building construction

- The raft slab and upstands are very slender, therefore structural input should confirm the thickness required. The suggested cement mix alternatives are not proven for these applications and may require thicker sections. Construction tolerance with 150mm CLT walls over a 150mm concrete upstand is negligible or non-existent and needs a defined construction approach to achieve this.
- The large glazed areas to the front door, lounge and dining areas have framing of differing thickness to side windows and a transom light over which look a bit clumsy and might be better if the doors had a heavier structural frame and a frameless glass surround was used for side and transom lights.
- The parapet cladding detail in section does not reflect the visuals articulation. A 150mm variation in height is shown in the sections and is clearly insufficient and a minimum of 300mm difference in levels was suggested, which would require a heavier timber section than the cladding to achieve.
- Exposed timber beams are shown to the ceilings in the lounge and dining spaces, but their absence elsewhere has not been explained. Further information is required on what these are (solid/laminated/timber type and how are they jointed and articulated - bolted/plated/pegged?)
- The threshold detail for the projecting landscape walls remains as a core issue for which the detail needs to demonstrate that this problem has been overcome. The walls appear monolithic in nature, which is crucial to the success of the scheme, and the splash zone detailing would inherently undermine that, unless it's been thought through. The same goes for the splash zone detail at the base of the cladding to the dwelling and details around the quarter-end plate lintel at the threshold to the private garden area are crucial.
- Concerns were raised over the longevity of the cladding material for the castellated, randomized timber cladding feature at parapet level. This could be addressed in the next presentation to the Panel by submission of a statement or report where the applicant has worked with a specific timber cladding supplier; who are on board with this detail and have helped them develop a specification to ensure longevity.
- A construction assembly / BIM 4D analysis to address the complexity inherent in connecting the RC upstands CLT superstructure over. It would be appropriate to have the lead designers work with their preferred supplier for the CLT so as they can understand the order of assembly which will be necessary and the level of accuracy required to make these two structural types marry. Or alternatively, an alternate construction proposal where adaptations on site might be possible to address any inconsistencies.
- Clarity is required on whether the entire parapet is resting on insulation, as no structural supports are shown.

Sustainability

- Overheating assessment for the whole dwelling has been provided. For buildings with a lower ground floor and upper ground floor, the temperature differential between these two zones can be quite significant. Therefore the sustainability statement should address this and particularly localised overheating risk for the dining room, which has a large amount of unshaded western-facing glazing.
- It appears that the bedrooms do not have a service zone over them, perhaps to reduce the overall parapet height. Given the complexity of the build, a schematic design of the MVHR system showing how it would be integrated would be beneficial.
- There are numerous technical details that should be handled as pre-commencement conditions, including involvement of the Passivhaus-certified designer and independent assessor.

Landscaping

- Further clarification is sought regarding the rationale for extending the strong linear geometry of the built form so prominently into the landscape proposals. The concept development shown on page 25 appears to reference cracks within the tree growth rings; however, these natural patterns are neither continuous nor straight. As currently presented, the proposal introduces a geometric landscape structure within a setting otherwise characterised by irregular woodland edges.
- Although the site lies immediately adjacent to and not within the High Weald AONB, it would be beneficial for the proposals to demonstrate a clearer relationship with the key characteristics and objectives for Woodland, set out in the management plan.
- The proposed use of a natural materials palette within the landscape design is welcomed.
- The proposal refers to orchard planting. In the context of the site and its wider landscape character, is this a suitable landscape feature?
- Consideration should be given to locating parking closer to the built form in order to reduce the visual impact of parked vehicles along the woodland edge.
- Planting details are required and mitigation for planting in the poor soil/concrete infill, together with hard landscaping materials.

Overall Assessment

Support with amendments.

The Panel's main concern was that there is no end user for this house. While noting that the building design is highly complex, it is necessary to ensure that its quality is not diluted during construction and that the scheme could be deliverable and attractive for a range of clients. This could be addressed in the next presentation to the Panel by submission of a construction plan.

The success of the scheme will ultimately depend on the quality of the detailing. At present, there is a lack of detail that shows the execution of these ideas. The Panel would therefore like to retain oversight of the detailed design, and only very minor amendments should be considered appropriate for any future Section 73 application.