

Cornwall Design Review Panel Meeting: Wednesday 4th October 2017

Site Address: Pendower beach regeneration PA17/01864 PREAPP

Proposal: Demolition of all existing buildings and developed land, removal of some existing trees. New development comprising 1No. beach café/restaurant, 1 shop retail unit, 8 residential semidetached properties, 12 residential apartments, site management accommodation, enhanced informal public woodland/nature open space.

Design and Development Team in attendance:

Gary Wyatt – Koha Architects
Derek Jackson – Koha Architects

Cornwall Design Review Panel Members in attendance:

Tim Kellett (Chair) – architect + urban designer
MJ Long – Architect
Andrew Rathbone – Landscape Architect
Nigel Stock – Architect
James Webb – Heritage Consultant + Urban Designer

Advisors to the Panel:

Martin Mumford – Police designing out crime advisor
Mark Ball – Development case officer

Observers :

Cllr. Julian German - Cornwall Council Ward Member
Steve Kirby - Planning Officer, Cornwall Council

Apologies :

None

Conflicts of Interest:

None

Thank you for your recent presentation.

Please now find below the formal guidance of the Panel. You should disregard any specific points made verbally by individual Panel members as part the formative discussion during the meeting as they may not now reflect the considered and collective views of the Panel.

For clarity the Cornwall Design Review Panel does not consider the principle of the development but focuses its observations on design matters arising from the presented scheme to assist both the Design Team and the Local Planning Authority.

Panel Guidance

Introduction

We are very pleased to be consulted on this project for a contemporary development in a very sensitive coastal environment on the Roseland Peninsula. The site is the old Pendower Beach Hotel which was previously a significant farmhouse 'Pendower House'. We understand the original farm buildings are still existing but have been much altered state because of continual renewal and extension of the former hotel. The National Trust own land here as part of the SW Coastal Path, named Pendower, and have established an adjacent visitor car park. The site is at the foot of a wooded valley and, unusually, can only be approached by car from either one side or the other. Only the footpath links the two sides with a small footbridge bridge over the stream. We were shown several pre-application proposals and other feasibility schemes which had either not been received favourably or were unviable.

Responding to the context and general form of the proposals

The panel was very encouraged by the design teams landscape-led approach to the site's regeneration. Most of the new buildings would be sited further back into the hillside on the existing levelled site area, but would be extended further north into the site. Nearly all the existing trees, [Monterey pines and cypress] were being retained which would retain screening and help settle the buildings into the landscape.

The team presented a study of typical local development forms [the urban grain] and focused on Portscatho as a suitable model for developing a strong linear built form of townhouses. The panel suggested that this model was local, but did not necessarily reflect the nature of this site. Pendower was a farmhouse and originally had a typical cluster or grouping of lower scale buildings around courtyards, using Monterey's for windbreaks which are now typical coastal features (AR). The panel agreed that a landscape-led approach should include the cultural, built, elements including settlements and past planting as a palimpsest. However, this should be carried through more convincingly in the final form. The current scheme did look more urban in character reflecting a row of large town houses and its linear form would have more of an impact in the longer views across the beach. The scale and regularity of the proposal was creating some landscape impacts not yet resolved, but with some rethinking that may be possible.

It was suggested by the panel that some reconsideration of the built form is undertaken based on a reconsideration of an appropriate 'model' – based more on a hamlet or farm group. This could include lowering the height of some buildings, introducing roof variation and clustering in groups for instance. The development of the restaurant as a low level green roof covered quadrant was a perfectly good solution allowing a beach facing building to be less dominant in the landscape and allowing residential views over the top.

Public and private spaces

Given that this location was going to be shared by residents and public visitors, the panel felt it was very important to make a clear distinction between public and private areas and reduce the permeability in the core of the scheme. The team had considered these issues but the panel advised that they should be more clearly defined, widening and overlooking Opeways if they are public and making it difficult to access smaller private Opeways, introducing gates at points that opened access to private rear spaces or the lane.

Architectural Language and Material Qualities

The design team have developed a repeated built form of asymmetrical town houses flanked by two larger apartment blocks - and a careful palette of materials that would help them recede visually into the landscape. This was considered a sensitive approach given the scale of development however a couple of suggestions were made for consideration. It was worth noting that typical historical settlements were comprised of building groups of either stone or rendered construction, so render need not be avoided totally in a scheme if the building forms work well. The buildings have quite dominant and heavy zinc fascias which although in a modern building here are untypical of the local historic character, a more clipped finer profile would be more successful complementing the eave-less detail of the pitched roof elements of the townhouses. It may be that a different approach to the grouping and form of the buildings [as outlined above] may enable a simplification of the detail and material variations.

Access and parking

Typically, these issues have a big impact on the local character in the way they are designed and managed. The team had identified access for the residential development along Rocky Lane and could provide adequate parking within the development [potentially 2 per unit]. Parking for the restaurant café, however, was limited on site and reliant on the existing parking on Rocky Lane and the adjacent National Trust Car Park. The panel had some concerns about the availability of these spaces and the safe routes that would be needed to them from the site. This may mean undertaking some sensitive improvements to the routes, including low level lighting, surfacing, new footbridge etc. which were not yet detailed. It was noted that the two sides were not linked by a road so it was unlikely people would move from one to another if one was full. Therefore, agreements with the National Trust and signing would be important. These are less design issues but important to resolve to retain good access, community safety and environmental management.

It was explained that the access via Rocky Lane would require some stabilisation to the embankment on the inland side of the road. This would be significant and needed to be undertaken in a sympathetic way bringing together good engineering and landscape design. The panel requested a careful study is undertaken to produce the most suitable result at this important site entry.

Heritage

Notwithstanding the current condition of the existing buildings and their surrounding landscape, the structures, landscape form and archaeology still hold some meaning and memory of the place. The name Pendower will carry on. It is a great shame to completely remove physical evidence of its past from the site, especially since justification for development is being based on its past use. The panel consider it is important to retain some features that can be recognised as part of its history and help to interpret changes and previous uses. There are many opportunities here from re-using some existing buildings, retaining the 'shadow' of previous buildings by following similar plan form (see also above), retaining the built landscape features such as walls, gateways or enclosures, and repairing the adjacent lime kiln. These can create a lead-in to good site interpretation.

Closing Remarks

The panel were very supportive of the landscape led approach to the redevelopment of this site and the opportunity to provide a wider regeneration scheme with some community benefit. They are also very supportive of the contemporary but contextual approach to the design of the buildings. However, it feels that the scale and form of the proposal is creating some landscape impacts that have not yet been fully resolved and would encourage the applicants team to reconsider the analysis of settlement form in this rural coastal area, so that a more suitable built form could be shaped. The panel suggest the current scheme is not yet an exceptional solution to this very sensitive site but has great potential to develop into a precedent for regenerating coastal and rural sites in a way that reflects the special qualities of the Cornish landscape.

We trust these observations are helpful and of assistance, it must be emphasized that they represent the views of the Cornwall Design Review Panel only and are based on the information presented and discussed at the Panel meeting. They cannot prejudice the outcome of a full appraisal of a planning application on this site or any final determination made through delegation by the Head of the Planning and Regeneration Service or a decision made by a Cornwall Council Committee. However, the local planning authority is required to have regard to the recommendations of this guidance in assessing applications – in accordance with para 62 of the NPPF.

Subject to payment of the appropriate fee the Panel would be pleased to review this project again preferably whilst still at the pre-application stage of the process. If the design of the project is subject to only modest revision prior to submission then a 'desktop review' may be a more appropriate mechanism with which to update our guidance, however, substantial change will merit a further 'full panel review'.

Queries regarding the report content, administration or operation of the Panel should be directed in the first instance to the Panel Facilitator, Judy Howard, Cornwall Council Tel (01872) 224311 or email jhoward@cornwall.gov.uk

Confidentiality

Unless expressly requested by the design team on the grounds of bona fide commercial confidentiality the information within this report is not regarded as confidential and the Panel will publish a copy on its web page.

Where commercial confidentiality has been requested by promoters then the Panel will respect that during the pre-application stage, although Cornwall Council is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the report may have to be made accessible in response to an information request, unless one of the exemptions in the FOIA applies.

Beyond the pre-application stage, this Cornwall Design Review Panel guidance report (together with any subsequent updated versions) will be made public once the project becomes registered as a formal planning application.

Use of the Report

Extracts from the report shall not be used for the purposes of marketing or for press release without the express permission of the Panel which should be sought via the Panel Facilitator.

Any comments or quotations taken from this guidance for use in other documents such as design and access statements must not be abridged and, if selective quotations are used, then a complete copy of the full guidance should be attached as an appendix to that document.