

# The Design Review Panel

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<b>Site</b>	Barton Lane, Instow, Devon, EX39 4JQ
<b>Proposal</b>	Purpose Five New Dwellings
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Devon District Council
<b>Applicant</b>	NDCI Ltd
<b>Architect</b>	hmda architects
<b>Agent</b>	Savills (UK) Ltd
<b>Review Date</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> February 2020

This is the first time the Design Review Panel has reviewed a proposal for this site. The session was booked by Savills (UK) Ltd and held in Exeter on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2020.

Paragraph 129 of the National Planning Policy Framework (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.”***

The Panel raised the following points: -

The Panel welcomes the very detailed and clear, professional presentation given at The Design Review Panel session, which it is felt was extremely helpful to the process.

Generally, the Panel is supportive of the applicants stated aspirations and the very professional design process being undertaken; however, notwithstanding this, it is suggested that the design should continue to evolve in accordance with the comments contained within this document.

The Panel notes that the heritage statement provided to the design review Panel is generally very good, and it is also noted this has been accepted by the local authority. Regarding heritage, the Panel considers the nearby listed church tower to be the most important element in terms of long-range views; this church tower is noted as being visible upon approach towards the site from the road junction. It is noted that the proposed

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new dwellings are within the setting of the tower. The Panel does not feel that this is problematic, however it may be helpful as part of any future planning application, to further explore longer range views towards the site demonstrating the design team have considered and responded to how the development may appear within the setting of the listed church. It is noted that between the listed church and the proposal site there are other built features, which should also be taken into account and considered as part of the setting.

Due to its proximity, it is noted that plot five may have the largest impact upon the setting of the listed church tower, and it is suggested that there may be an opportunity to use an alternative house type on plot five that does not include a large gable end, which it is felt may be resulting in an overly dominant form. In a spirit of helpfulness, it is suggested that one option could be to utilise a thinner more linear house type in this location. This may help to reduce the prominence of the proposed house on plot five.

Regarding the landscape character and designations, it is noted that the LVIA is based around a tight study zone. It is suggested it may be helpful for a wider context to be explored, as it is noted there are some sensitive landscape areas including numerous SSSI's in the vicinity of the proposal site. Based upon the information presented, the Panel does not feel that the sensitive surrounding landscape areas are problematic in terms of the acceptability of the proposals, however it may be beneficial as part of any future planning application to further demonstrate that a wider/higher level of landscape appraisal has been undertaken.

Overall, it is considered that the layout of the site is rational and sensible. Furthermore, it is noted that there will be some loss of hedgerow in order to allow for access, however it appears that the hedgerow to be removed may be of a low value, and the provision of a new section of hedge bank is supported, also considered to represent an enhancement compared to the existing situation. Notwithstanding the above, it is noted that the proposed hedges do compartmentalize parts of the site. There may be an opportunity for access to be provided to the green space located within the north east part of the site for amenity, whilst also providing ecological enhancements.

The proposed boundary treatments to the rear of the dwellings back onto hedge banks, and it is suggested it would be beneficial to consider how these would be managed in the long term, so as to ensure the hedge is protected.

Generally, it is considered it would be beneficial to further consider accessibility and level changes across the site, also to the proposed dwellings. Long site sections would be beneficial to demonstrate how each of the dwellings will sit within and relate to the wider site.

Regarding highways, it is considered the proposals integrate well into the pedestrian and vehicular network. It is noted that the access splay is compliant, although the access splay may be in excess of the minimum standards required. In an effort to help reduce traffic speeds, it may be beneficial to provide some low-level planting or other feature within the open space within the splay. In a spirit of helpfulness, it is suggested it may be helpful to ensure the proposed tuning head can appropriately accommodate refuse vehicles. It is considered that the provision of cycle storage would be beneficial.

In a spirit of helpfulness, the Panel questions if there may be an opportunity to move the pedestrian path to the north of the site, or to make the adopted highway a shared surface, as this may enable the width of the proposed road within the site to be reduced. Currently there is a concern that the internal road may be overly

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wide, and a narrower road would result in a less urban look and feel, which would be supported.

It is noted that over 50% of the site is to remain undeveloped and green, and this is supported. It may be beneficial to empirically quantify the proposed ecological net gain using a biodiversity budget, compared to the existing situation, in order to help demonstrate an enhancement, rather than just mitigation.

The Panel acknowledges and understands the desire to provide non-traditional upside-down living. However, there is concern that trying to create a traditional style of architecture to accommodate a non-traditional internal arrangement, may be resulting in various problems and tensions in the design and overall aesthetic. For example, the upside-down living is resulting in a proposal to incorporate large-scale fenestration at first-floor level, which is not in keeping with a more rural traditional vernacular. Furthermore, the provision of upside-down living is resulting in the desire to create flat roof terraces at first-floor level, which in turn are informing the size of the garages, garage roof forms, and the proposal to incorporate an external access stair.

It is considered that the size of the garages is very large and results in overly large footprints; this is considered to be particularly problematic for plot five and its relationship with the listed church. Reducing the proposed double garages to single garages, may also be beneficial in helping to reduce the scale and sense of mass of the proposed dwellings. It is considered that the external stairs, providing access to the flat roof terraces, does visually increase the bulk of the proposed units; it is suggested it would be beneficial if these could be removed.

It is felt that the proposed house types currently feel suburban, and it may be beneficial for a more rural/agricultural vernacular response; this may represent a more unique response that it is felt would be appropriate for what is considered to be a unique natural setting. There is a concern that architecturally the proposal does not yet appear to hang together holistically. It is suggested it may be beneficial for the proposals to be either very traditional, (being reflective of a more agricultural vernacular), or alternatively be modern and contemporary. Currently there is a concern that the proposals may be falling between two stools in this regard.

The Panel notes that there is a requirement and aspiration to provide a mix of house types, however contrary to this, it is noted that only two-house types are being proposed. As above, it is suggested proposing a different house type for plot five, that responds to the setting of the church, may also help to demonstrate the provision of a mix of house types.

It is suggested it may be beneficial for the proposals to further consider their energy and sustainability credentials. It is considered that being able to demonstrate a passive low energy approach may help to demonstrate the proposals as representing a high standard of architecture, also demonstrate a rational and justification for the proposed form and design. It is suggested that this aspect should be considered at this stage of the design process, as it will have an impact upon the proposed form and appearance of the proposed dwellings. If the above suggestion is adopted, it is felt it would be helpful to provide predicted energy calculations to empirically demonstrate how the buildings may perform.

In a spirit of helpfulness, it is suggested that the provision of eyelevel CGI views/photomontages from further afield, (both before and after), may be helpful as part of any future presentation or planning application.

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

In summary the main conclusions of the Panel are: -

- The Panel welcomes the very detailed & clear, professional presentation given at the Design Review Panel session.
- Longer range views towards the site may be beneficial.
- It may be beneficial to use an alternative house type on plot five that does not include a large gable end.
- It may be helpful for the LVIA to consider a wider context.
- Providing access to the green space located within the northeast part of the site for amenity may be beneficial.
- Consider the long-term management of the proposed rear boundary fences.
- Further consider accessibility & level changes across the site.
- Low-level planting or other feature in the open space within the visibility splay may be beneficial.
- There is a concern that the internal road may be overly wide resulting in an urban feel.
- It may be beneficial to empirically quantify the proposed ecological net gain.
- Trying to create a traditional style of architecture to fit a non-traditional internal arrangement may be resulting in various problems & tensions in the design.
- It is considered that the size of the garages is very large & results in overly large footprints.
- The house types feel suburban & it may be beneficial for a more rural/agricultural vernacular response.
- It may be beneficial for the proposals to further consider their energy & sustainability credentials.

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### NOTES:

Please note that the content of this document is opinion and suggestion only, given by a Panel of volunteers to the local authority, 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 Design Review Ltd 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.