

South East Regional **Design Panel**

Tel: +44(0)1634 401166 Fax: +44(0)1634 403302

Nathan McLoughlin  
McLoughlin Planning  
Signpost Cottage,  
The Camp, Stroud,  
Gloucestershire  
GL6 7HN

the **architecture** centre  
Historic Dockyard  
Chatham  
Kent  
ME4 4TZ

Email: [info@kentarchitecture.co.uk](mailto:info@kentarchitecture.co.uk)  
[www.architecturecentre.org](http://www.architecturecentre.org)

11 December 2012

Dear Mr McLoughlin

**NEW HOUSE, PARADISE FARM, SOUTH NEWINGTON, OXFORDSHIRE**

Thank you for inviting the Panel to review the emerging designs for the new house at the above site. The Panel had the opportunity to visit the site with Duncan and Jaynie Ford ahead of our meeting at Paradise Farm on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2012. We are grateful to Richard Parr of Parr Walker Architects for his presentation and to Tracey Morrissey of Cherwell District Council for introducing us to the planning context of the site. We welcome the opportunity to be involved at this early stage of the project's development.

The site and wider estate at Paradise Farm offers the opportunity for the development of a new home uniquely connected to its fantastic landscape. The Panel welcomed the strength and clarity of the design concept for planning the building based around two distinct wings. The designs presented appear promising in their approach to the design of the home. However the Panel felt that further resolution was required with regard to the building form and appearance together with its siting and relationship with the landscape. We suggest that the team focus on these aspects while retaining and enhancing the clarity of the original concept.

**BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

The site at Paradise Farm is located just to the south of the village of Wigginton and a short distance from South Newington. The site is currently home to stables, with the old farm house, barns and ancillary buildings located at the centre of the site, other than this collection of buildings the site is undeveloped. We understand the proposal is to build a new home for Mr and Mrs Ford and their family on the site. The core of the site will retain the stable function which we understand will continue to operate under distinct management.

673-394.1 Paradise Farm, South Newington Review

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Certain areas of the wider estate have suffered from some mismanagement which has led to its current mixed quality. Part of the plan for occupying the site includes rationalisation of the stables and works to the wider landscape, including hedge row management.

The area of the site chosen for the new house is on the south facing slope of the gentle valley which runs through the site. Given its location the house is unlikely to be visible from many vantage points although this is yet to be tested in detail. The estate is crossed by a number of rights of way, which will remain open and will not pass near the house.

There is a strong presumption against isolated residential development in the countryside but the intention is to make the case for an exception under the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 55). The Panel is mindful of the wording of the NPPF.

We have the following comments on the emerging design:

#### DESIGN CONCEPT AND SITING

The siting of any new intervention in the open countryside needs to be taken with care. The choice of site for the new house needs a clear narrative which connects it with its chosen location. The current site on the side of the valley may be appropriate, but the detailed rationale for this choice is currently unclear. Understanding the particular qualities of this location, including the *views it affords*, *cross slope*, planned route of approach to the house and its position in the wider landscape are critical and, we feel, need further investigation. The implications in terms of impact on distant views need to be empirically tested by verified imaging in order to justify the siting choice.

The layout of the building with two linked wings planned around a large linear court could create a dramatic and exciting home. The use of the central stairway as a link between the two different wings is welcomed, as is the use of chimneys and hearths to structure the main spaces. The Panel support this clear well developed design concept for the new home.

The spirit of the country house, however, would suggest that its design is uniquely connected to its location; at the minute it is not clear that the two are intimately linked. We understand that the location of the house on the estate has been developing in parallel, but separately, from the design of the building itself. As it stands further work to tie these two together is needed; this should be pursued as a question of landscape and architectural design together.

#### DETAILED DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

The design concept of creating two distinct areas within the house, which respond to their uses, function, orientation and adjacencies, is clear. As currently planned the two

wings appear similar, but their aspect, operation and connection with the landscape are very distinct. We would encourage the further exploration of the similarities and differences between the two wings. The way the balance of roof and base, solids (walls) and voids (openings), and the choice of materials could be more responsive to these differences, as could the way they relate to their different relationships to the sloping topography. Studies showing how the building engages with the landscape features will be important in determining the appropriate height of the buildings. The experience of the house in views upon approach for example, especially the western façade, plays down the original concept of two distinct wings. We feel the treatment of the elevations need further development in order to support the clarity of the overall concept. Additionally, the materials chosen for the roof have the potential to be very fluid and expressive, which is currently being underplayed.

We would encourage you to consider the flexibility and adaptability of the building to future change. In this regard the home should be fully accessible, the stepped access at the main entrance currently restricts this.

#### LANDSCAPE AND SITE PLANNING

We feel that now the location of the house has been settled on the design of the building should start to be shaped by the particular qualities of the landscape, especially the topography and orientation. Additional work is required on the immediate domestic and wider landscape, and the interface between these two and the house itself. This work should incorporate consideration of the approach to the house and the working landscape.

This new home is set to be one of a collection of buildings on the site which need to be planned together. This should include not just the house, but the pool house and associated buildings and the wider estate too; at present we find these relationships unconvincing. The link, or otherwise, between the house and the farm should be explored. As it stands we welcome the removal of poorly sited and poor quality grooms accommodation and the reestablishment of the complex of buildings around the old farm house.

#### SUSTAINABILITY

Issues of sustainability are inseparable from the pursuit of good design. New houses in the countryside are intended to be exemplary, including in their response to issues of environmental sustainability. It would be good to hear more about how consideration of these factors has influenced the design. Reflection on how the new house works alongside the wider estate planning could offer an innovative model for dealing with these issues more generally in rural areas.

I hope you find our advice helpful but do please contact me if anything in this letter is unclear.

Yours sincerely



**ROBERT OFFORD**  
Panel Manager

cc Duncan and Jaynie Ford  
Richard Parr, Parr Walker Architects  
Tracey Morrissey, Cherwell District Council  
Caroline Ford, Cherwell District Council

**Panel members present: Richard Portchmouth (Meeting Chair), Ian Deans, Keith Williams**

*This review has been commissioned by Ferax Planning on behalf of Mark and Autumn Rowan-Hull, with the knowledge and support of Cherwell District Council.*

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

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