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7/11/2019

Dear Mr Slaney,

Design Review Panel (DRP) openness and transparency

Findon Parish Council (FPC) has been made aware of several meetings held with the South Downs National Park Design Review Panel (DRP) in the last 12 months regarding two very contentious locations in Findon, namely SDNP/19/01876/FUL - Soldiers Field House, Soldiers Field Lane, BN14 OSH (initial and revised proposals) and SDNP/18/03442/PRE and the very recent SDNP/19/05226/PIP - land at Elm Rise, BN14 OUP.

This was raised at the FPC Planning Committee meeting on 31 October. FPC is very disappointed that the notes from the meetings were not published on the SDNPA Public Access system to sit alongside all other documentation related to the applications. It would be valuable for openness and transparency by the SDNPA if DRP meeting notes were included for all relevant applications to inform statutory consultees and local residents of what is being discussed at the DRP with SDNPA Planning Officers, potentially for the benefit of developers, applicants etc

It states in the meeting notes that the Panel's response to the scheme will be placed on the Planning Authority's web site where it can be viewed by the public. This statement is difficult to agree with as unless the statutory consultees and members of the public a) even know that the DRP exists and where to find it on the SDNPA website, b) are not advised that a meeting will take place and c) the meeting notes are not published on the Public Access system with all the other application documentation, it could understandably be construed that, for whatever reason, the information is not being actively publicised

FPC would like to propose that all parish councils within the National Park are notified when a meeting of the DRP is scheduled for an application in their parish, in addition to being notified parish councils should have the opportunity to attend and provide the 'local context', and that all notes of meetings by the DRP are published on the SDNPA Public Access system for that application. I understand that this may well be the agreed procedure, however it isn't happening at the moment.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Fiona MacLeod

Cc Margaret Paren, Chair, SDNPA and Alun Alesbury, Chair, SDNPA Planning Committee

Response from Tim Slaney, Director of Planning, SDNPA, received by FPC on 27 November 2019:

Dear Fi

Thank you for your letter of November 7th regarding the SDNPA Design Review Panel (DRP).

You raise the issue of DRP published notes. The notes are published on the website after each monthly session in this location: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/planning-advice/design-review-panel/design-review-panel-minutes/>

If you were looking for them using our webpage you could simply enter 'design review panel' in the search box and it would direct you there. We think they are in the most logical location, under planning advice.

Your idea of separately putting the DRP notes for a particular application on the development management website has been put to the Head of Development Manager who will consider this suggestion. To date this has not been a common practice as the DRP notes are purely independent advice to the Authority (and to the applicant) and the notes do not constitute a consultation response which would automatically lead to them being published on the development management website for a specific application.

The DRP is an independent panel of professionals providing a voluntary design review service to the Authority. The DRP is not a consultee for planning applications and DRP sessions are not public meetings. The DRP have no role in determining planning applications. DRP sessions follow a strict protocol which are time-limited and focus on panel questions to applicants and panel advice to the applicant and the Authority for improving development design. For these reasons it has never been the practice to involve other consultees such as parish councils, and if it were, as I am sure you can appreciate, other consultees might also feel that they ought to also be present to put their views to the DRP which would not be practicable.

In recent years the Authority has been facilitating more design workshop sessions, sometimes involving the DRP. These events have involved other stakeholders including parish representatives and this has proved useful and productive, so it is a practice that we intend to continue.

Regards

Tim

Tim Slaney

Director of Planning

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