



TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE

COMMITTED TO THE VALUES ESTABLISHED BY
TRADITIONAL AND CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE

WWW.TRADITIONALARCHITECTUREGROUP.ORG

TAG PEER REVIEW- HODDER BRIDGE, CLITHEROE, 21 JUNE, 2021

Introduction-

Present-

Project Team:

Mr and Mrs Bell- Owners;
James Ellis- RTPI, Rural Solutions;
Alex Robinson- CMLI, Rural Solutions;
Sandy Fishpool- RIBA, Rural Solutions;
Kit Knowles- Ecospheric;
John Hinchliffe- Hinchliffe Heritage.

TAG Panel:

Scot Masker- RIBA, Masker Architects- TAG Peer Review Panel Facilitator;
Phil Hawdon- RIBA, Hawdon Russell Architects;
Peter Hitchen- RIBA, Peter Hitchen Architects;
Andy Hawthorne- RIBA, Andrew Hawthorne Architects;
Ian Clare- CMLI, Milieu Landscape.

James Ellis, Director at Rural Solutions and planning consultant for the owners, invited the Traditional Architecture Group Peer Review Panel to assist in commentary on proposals for a new house at Hodder Bridge, Clitheroe. The Peer review follows pre-application consultation the applicant has undertaken with the local authority.

An application is to be made as an NPPF clause 79e application.

The Panel visited site the site on 21 June 2021 with the design team, we had a full view of the site walking it from top to bottom. The visit was from 11:00am-12:00.

The Panel discussion was until 3pm.

As this is a Paragraph 79e proposal the bar is high for delivering a design that is

of exceptional quality, in that it:

- *is truly outstanding or innovative, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and*
- *would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.*

Generally, this should be a holistic loop of investigation and response as the design team, working in collaboration, builds the logic of the proposals from the evidence gathered. The scheme should flow from analysis and investigation.

The Panel applaud the extent to which the applicant has analysed the site and the detail put into the consideration of the design.

This early stage is about the *Whys* and *How Comes* of: siting, arrangement (including issues of orientation, spatial sequencing both externally and internally, plan layout) and the qualities of the three dimensional spaces that will be created. There is an internal and external landscape to consider and the relationships and transitions between them.

Landscape and siting-

The landscape appraisal that has been presented is useful and it is vital that this should act as the foundation for design development moving forward. Projects such as these should be landscape and contextually led with the proposed scheme informed by and growing from the landscape, visual and contextual (and cultural) analysis. This then sets a clear planning and landscape character context.

There are two parts to this appraisal- the review of the general siting and proposed landscape treatment and the heritage report of local country houses by Hinchcliffe Heritage which outlines features relevant to the scheme from the local built context.

Additional information on how local examples respond to their landscape would be useful in the form of estate plans showing scale, geometric arrangements, style and content.

Of particular interest are the diagrams on pages 44 - 47 in the landscape appraisal that look to define the most appropriate place to site the new house and ancillary structures buildings.

The principal point is that the site is extraordinary both in the possibilities it offers for a great design but also in its context. The architectural response must be mindful that the opportunity offered by clause 79e is an intensification beyond normal considerations and must be understood through the possibilities of the site.

The proposed design should enhance an already intrinsically beautiful setting. The Panel believes there is much scope here to do so.

The Panel were generally in agreement with the choice of position for the new house and the logic of orientation and placement in section / level.

The entrance sequence from the main road is well considered. The drive to be partly sunken into the field taking advantage of the existing contours, and gently winding to allow a sense of discovery on approaching the house. Both the digging in and curving shape suppress the effect of the drive and heighten the experience of glimpse views to the house.

Strategic trees and pinch point as that between the pond grove and new proposed woodland planting work to subtly frame the arrival. The true arrival being signalled by the more formal circular forecourt.

Note the ground rises steeply to the north and the proposal includes ground works, terracing and planted mounding which will further contain the new structures in the natural bowl within which the overall site sits.

These confining moves to “nest” the structures add to the sense of discovery of the house. The more formal areas of courtyards and small gardens intimate to the structures intensifies the experience. These formal spaces around the house offer a strong relationship with internal house functions whilst taking advantage of the sloping site and views to create a series of small formal terraces. The proposed style and character of proposed materials is fully in keeping with the emerging design concept.

Further detail cross sections will be necessary in understanding the landscape design in detail.

The panel was interested in what might happen with the cut and fill and how that would be managed. It was understood that all materials would be used onsite in the landscaping. There is however a lack of detailed information with regard to the impact of the contouring in association with the site levels between the as existing and as proposed. A topographical survey has been carried out, the information is available with which to demonstrate the landscape details of the proposal by virtue of strategic cross sections across the entire site area taking account of the public footpaths to the north eastern edge and across the river along its south west bank in the woodland. The first floor level datum and overall height of the house needs to be clearly shown along with retaining wall heights.

The river setting is of interest in that the river itself is more of an acoustic presence than one which is visible. The river itself set some meters below the edge of the bank. The proposed pond would be an element of water that could be appreciated. Its form and visibility might be more considered as the more formal oval seems odd in the naturalised parkland setting proposed (especially that no other follies or distant points of focus in the landscape are part of the overall concept).

The panel considered an opportunity exists to reconsider the pond location, scale and shape to create a landscape feature with both ecological and visual benefits to reinforce the parkland character without formalising the emerging views of the proposed house.

Some three-dimensional rendering of the approach sequence and external spaces would be useful in assisting to understand the design and the special qualities of the scheme. Detail design will need to show a response to issues surrounding climate change and sustainability, through plant and material selection.

It is assumed that with any full application a landscape and visual impact assessment will be submitted and a full reasoning showing how the development demonstrates landscape enhancement.

The Buildings-

It is understood by the panel that the building form is driven not just by an historic aesthetic set by precedent but also by the science driving the energy performance of the building. The simple square and rectangular forms of the plan are necessary to maintain a good surface to volume ratio of the building and to make the most of efficient orientation. The resulting pavilion form of the house speaks both to its functionality as well as the romantic notion of discovery of the house as a temple or folly nested into the landscape.

The square Palladian planning of the main house works well in ordering the formal interior spaces and the principle of a hierarchy of building form language and material was explained to the Panel. The main house was to be of more refined stuff and as one progresses back to the ancillary buildings and stable courtyard these materials and details would become less formal (more course) so the nature and status of parts of the building can be read in form and material. The Panel thought this to be an essential component of the breadth and depth of the design that will add to its exceptional qualities.

There was much discussion about aspects of the detailing of the building. The cast of the building as a more formal farmhouse is understood and a good choice. This is a relatively small house (the design team has provided a very useful area comparison with other estate houses in the area), but certain parts where some classically led set pieces are proposed should be considered further, these parts being:

- The north-west entrance composition of front porch, tri-partite window with bracketed cornice feature and dormer above- The Panel's comments were that those elements could work better together if strengthened in a more comprehensive composition, the dormer and tri-partite window being perhaps too weak in the vertical hierarchy of the main entrance elevation. The side lights to the tri-partite window too narrow and out of proportion with the other glazing pains. It may be a pediment over this window reaching up into the parapet cornice would assist. The porch is too deep as seen from the south-west;
- The south-east elevation of the house itself seems to work well. The tripartite window form is repeated on the first floor, again this is weak and also needs some further work;
- The junction between the main house and kitchen family wing is currently an unhappy collision with the lower roof form slamming into the main house parapet and roof form. It may be that only a very minor adjustment is needed to resolve. There is an imbalance here between the forms, the proportions are currently not working together and is leading to the difficulty with the junction between the buildings;
- Detailing of columns, cornices, surrounds, quoins and parapets should all follow the general rules of classical detailing. Some of the detail illustrated is not correct. If this is to be a truly exceptional piece of work those aspects of the scheme need to be worked out fully. Maybe the details could be simpler and more robust, less fussy, some aspects taken from local examples and the vernacular building detailing. The building will then speak fully to both design and crafting of a building set in tradition and context yet built for today. The skills and craft necessary to execute the stonework alone should be a significant consideration in establishing the exceptional qualities of the proposal. The detailing both of the classical forms and that concerning the Passivehaus compliance should be part of any application to show the intentions of the proposals can be realistically executed;

- Emphasis was placed on the axial arrangement running west to east through the building. The central stairs interrupts this, some further consideration of that sequence and the function of the stairs in the spatial arrangement should be considered;
- Lanterns and roof lights perhaps could be much less evident. In the reality of viewing a building form ground level nearer the buildings it is understood that they likely will not be seen from the ground however there are vantage points where the roofscape might be seen from above, a fifth elevation to consider!

Conclusion-

The Panel thought that the project has the potential to achieve an exceptional design.

The building process that would be part of this project in itself would be a significant exceptional and innovative departure from the norm.

Subject to the production of more detailed information and further evidence to support the ability of the design to achieve the Passivehaus standards (which formed an integral and highly important aspect of the proposal) in association with further development of the design with regard to the impact in the setting this has the potential to be truly outstanding.

Issued 29 June 2021.



A Linked Society of the RIBA

The Traditional Architecture Group is an independent voluntary association of RIBA members. It is a Linked Society of the RIBA but retains no legal or financial call on the RIBA. The aims of the society are to celebrate the highest achievements of the past as a living source for modern inspiration. The group seeks to work within architectural, planning and educational disciplines to promote the value of a traditional approach in architecture and design. The group will provide mutual support, a meeting point and a venue for the exchange of ideas for those individuals interested in or practicing contemporary traditional architecture.

Its registered and correspondence address is

Unit 6 Ash House, Vale View Business Units, Crown Lane South, Ardleigh, Colchester, CO7 7PL +44(0)1206 580528