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TAG PEER REVIEW- WOODFOLD VILLA, SHORROCK GREEN, MELLOR, 30 September 2022

Present:

Project Team:

Francis Shaw, RIBA, Managing Director, Shaw & Jagger Architects- Client's Agent;
Matt Massarella-Gill, RIBA, Architect, Shaw & Jagger Architects;
Ian Dieffenthaler RIBA, SCA- Heritage and Historic Landscape Consultant;
Kathryn Jukes, RTPI, Directions Planning Consultancy;

TAG Panel:

Scot Masker, RIBA, Masker Architects- TAG Peer Review Panel Facilitator;
Jan Maciag, RIBA- Folium Architects;
Guy Horsley, RIBA- Horsley Townsend Architects;
Eamonn Byrne, CMLI- Eamonn Byrne Landscape Architects

Introduction-

The TAG Peer Review Group was asked by Francis Shaw of Shaw & Jagger Architects, the applicant's agent, to undertake a follow up review regarding the scheme subsequent to the Applicants' pre-application submission with the local authority and our review of 15th June 2022 (which should be referred to in the context of the below).

In summary the Panel's conclusion on the scheme presented then was:

This is more than competent restrained design that should be able to achieve the requirements as set out in the paragraph 80e clause. In the next iterations and with the additional information suggested there should be no barrier to achieving this.

The application is to be made as an NPPF clause 80e application.

NPPF Paragraph 80(e) clause which states:

80. Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:

(e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:

- *is truly outstanding, 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.*

With the detailed review of June in mind and relative to the Panels' conclusion, the following further comments are offered.

Landscape, siting, setting and biodiversity-

As before the Panel strongly supports the siting and treatment of the landscape setting. The applicant has obtained an option on the additional land to the east necessary to make the application as a Paragraph 80e proposal viable. The treatment of the landscaped areas as parkland and with the additional hedging proposed enhances the local area and creates the appropriate setting for a house of this quality.

The following points are noted:

- Hedge along Further Lane now shown on the landscape plan and 3D view;
- The proposed entrance pillars on the landscape plan and in the 3D view;
- Lake moved a little further away from the boundary with Further lane, to allow room for the boundary hedgerow;
- Planting now shown more accurately on the 3D views, including detail of the terraces/ planting beds around the house; and,
- Show the differentiation between close mown lawn grass and meadow on the landscape plan (where it might occur). Show marginal planting around the lake on the landscape plan.

The Building-

The layout of the building follows in the traditional of a strong bi-axial Classical arrangement.

It is an interpretation of a 'villa' – a country building designed 'in the round' to be seen from variety of directions. The two principal elevations are the north arrival elevation and the west garden/park elevation. The principal axis emanates from the north elevation at the portico, transects several important rooms and emerges centrally on the south (pool) elevation. The secondary axis starts centrally on the main block of the west elevation and, transects the loggia, dining room and stair hall to emerge at the rear entrance on the east elevation. There are two other minor axis strung out on the principal axis where the Orangery/Pool single story extension emerges from the main block. Both have an E-W orientation and are centred on the Orangery link and the Pool building at the end.

The arrangement of axis sets out the formal volumes and symmetries of the building to produce an orderly and cohesive design of matching plans and convincing elevational treatments.

- **Floor Plans**

The ground floor plan has achieved the pleasing blend of classical formality with the needs of modern and culturally contextual requests from the client's brief. It is especially clever to see the central circular room,

which in a renaissance building might have been the central point of circulation, re-purposed as the communal kitchen.

The principal reception rooms are arranged to face west onto the garden and Park. The library is away from too much sunlight on the NE corner and the pool, although shaded with new tree planting, will benefit from a south aspect.

The principal two storey, top lit stair hall is located to the east of the building. It is centred on the secondary E-W axis and intercepted, off centre by the principal axis. It forms the central hollow and space of the building interior and allows for the uncomplicated arrangement of bedrooms, bathrooms etc. to surround it.

- **Elevations & Architectural Style**

The design of the proposed new house is that of a villa in a parkland setting. It is quite correctly approached from an oblique angle revealing the adroit relationship between the principal west and the north elevations.

The stylistic direction is generated by envisioning the building as having been built on the Woodfold Hall Estate (as a separate villa) in the early part of the 19th century. It is unapologetically in the neo classical tradition of Sir William Chambers, James Wyatt & Sir Jeffrey Wyatville taking its feel and detail from the Roman tradition rather than the neo-Greek of Cockrell, Wilkins etc. The design statement offers many forerunners including Woodfold Hall itself.

All share, as far as country house designs go, the Palladian arrangement of a temple front (portico) as the central element to a plain box like block building. The classical detail of the portico is all important as the definition of style and historic context. This formal design device is offered as the arrival elevation on the north elevation.

On the adjoining west elevation, with a slight setback, the architecture is more modelled with a pair of bay projections book-ending a recessed central colonnaded loggia. The lack of side antis pilasters being a reference back to Stoke Poges Park by James Wyatt.

The pool building and attendant link continue the Regency theme with strip pilasters and three part windows under a segmental arch as presented on Woodfold Hall.

- **Other minor points / suggestions for minor revisions-**

The Panel was pleased to see that the orangery had been considered further and that the Panel's comments were addressed, and alternatives investigated. The Orangery is now fully resolved both externally and internally.

In general the architectural detailing remains a sparse simple language done well.

Further information was submitted regarding specific building details such as those for the Ionic columns and the front pediment. The panel suggest the detail of the classical composition be refined and dealt with in a holistic fashion and with regard to rest of the design and classical canon. The portico is the defining architectural element of the proposed building and it must be clearly and correctly interpreted.

Claverton Manor and Woolley Park are cited as examples where Wyattville used pilasters or full columns to terminate the colonnades.

It is important to emphasise the quality of detailing to the undercroft. In essence this is the modern-day equivalent of the stable block. The design and detailing of this area should be considered in as much detail as to the other parts of the house in order for the execution of the project to be thorough.

To reiterate any application should be supported by a more detailed explanation of materials sources and craftsmanship that will be used.

It is clear that the form of construction and materials proposed in the new building will require significant skills in building construction that are not commonly used. This will enhance the understanding of building and sustainable construction where high quality natural materials are used that have long life spans and which can eventually be easily recycled.

This is a highly sustainable design as well as being an artistically accomplished one.

Conclusion

The overall is an exceptionally competent new neo-classical villa. The design stays true to the Roman and Renaissance architecture of its inspiration while accommodating the needs of modern life in what will be a visually comfortable and elegant home.

It expands the repertoire of the neo classical in the combination of elements, through a long process that achieves a whole, seemingly without effort.

It will be a great asset to the surrounding area (including the historic context) and a marker of how acceptable rural development can proceed in the future.

As previously set out, ***this is a design that reflects the highest standards of architecture and will fulfil the goals stated in NPPF Paragraph 80e for a project of exceptional quality.***

The proposal harmonises with the topography and wider setting to produce an exemplar example of its building type and, in its context, reflects the highest standards of architecture.

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A Linked Society of the RIBA

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