

BUILDING A BETTER HARROW

Beverley Kuchar
Harrow Council
Civic Centre
Station Road
London HA1 2XF

10th July 2020

Dear Beverley,

Harrow Council Design Review Panel: Former Stanmore Golf Club & Driving Range Centre, Brockley Hill, Stanmore, HA7 4LR

As you know, the **Stanmore Golf Club & Driving Range Centre** was the subject of a Design Review on 25th June 2020, and I am writing to summarise the Panel's comments.

The Panel's comments, and recommendations moving forward, are as follows:

Overview

For design purposes, this summary refers to the entire piece of land in the client's ownership (both proposed development land and wider former golf course land) as the 'site'.

The development site sits within Green Belt allocation on Brockley Hill. Given the sensitivity of the site's context and to justify the case for Very Special Circumstances, an exemplary architectural, landscape and sustainability response is required and increasing BREEAM rating to 'Excellent' will be of critical importance for a new build development.

The orientation of the site and distribution of massing concerning roof height is stressed as key components for change and the Panel encourages the applicant to explore suitable typologies to develop a more cohesive design.

Scale/massing and orientation

The proposed development is successful in reducing visual presence on the surrounding context by being less longitudinal and more compact in plan than the current building. However, the new building could more directly address the Brockley Hill road primary sightline.

The Panel questions the arrangement of the buildings. The south side of the building seems neglected and doesn't take advantage of the orientation for views and passive solar heating. This is a missed opportunity as guests will gravitate towards the sun leading to crowded areas around the car park as opposed to the built green space, as the proposal stands.

The current proposal sees three distinct blocks directly abutting each other with different material treatments. It is clear that there was intent to minimise building footprint, which is welcomed, but the architectural rationale is not clear. The separate archery building seems accidental as no rationale was presented for its exclusion from the main building. While using a similar material language is beneficial, a

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clear explanation will be needed if the archery building is to stay separated as the design progresses. The Panel invites the applicant to consider creating a more cohesive collection of buildings, celebrating interstitial space by pulling the buildings apart. A courtyard is a common typology in rural settings. This would allow an opportunity to design for the context and maximise the benefits of the new rural setting with gradual thresholds between outside and inside.

The panel suggests that as long as the building footprint is not larger than the proposal considered during this DRP, it should be possible to arrange that footprint across the hard-standing of the current building and car park area in whatever way gives the most successful architectural response.

The Panel also suggests exploring how the architecture could support wedding photography by considering the architectural composition as a series of special moments or scenes. Responding better to the south side of the building and the views will generate a more memorable experience for the guests as the architecture will drive these opportunities and accommodate them comfortably, making the most of the rural setting.

Internal layout and spatial relationships

At present, the building's plan is grouped around a central toilet block, clearly pragmatic but creating an underwhelming arrival sequence and spaces around the sides that feel a little corridor-like. The Panel suggests re-thinking what the focal function should be.

There is a lack of clarity as to how the sports function fits into the main building, and subsequently, how and where that procession of events is carried out. The practical aspects of table tennis storage, transportation, changing rooms and admin offices were not evident in the review. The Panel understands the Banqueting programme takes precedence but clarity is needed around how both operationally cohere.

The addition of gender-neutral changing rooms in addition to male and female changing rooms should also be considered.

The orangery and upstairs mezzanine have the potential to be 'delightful spaces', however, they are currently limiting the design due to a lack of function and scale. While the Panel understands the need for flexible, connecting corridors for views into the main area, they do not support them if they hinder the wider design.

The Panel invites the applicant to consider relocating certain ground floor functions to the first floor as this can reduce the overall development footprint. There is also a potential for the food-tasting and entrance foyer to rationalise and become a single, more generous celebration space with greater flexibility, leading more directly to the banqueting area.

The roof heights and types seem to contradict the functions of the spaces. The wedding hall usually reflects the grand gesture it symbolises, however, in this design it seems the entrance takes visual precedence over the main banqueting space. As such, the processional spaces currently seem grander and more celebratory. The flat roof of the banqueting space creates an 'underwhelming' spatial condition that opens onto a North facing garden, leading to a disjointed experience for guests. The banqueting space has a very deep plan and if this is to be the final design, light wells should be considered to increase natural light throughout the space.

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Materiality

There doesn't seem to be a clear rationale for the form of the building at present. The barn and outbuildings could be an appropriate typology. The exact entrance to the building should be considered further.

The materiality and form of the banqueting space should address the wider development pallet and typology. The introduction of a roof pitch to this space and alignment with adjoining eaves and adjacent spaces would help to create a more cohesive holistic form.

Additionally, the elevations and facades of the banqueting hall could have a more visually appealing rhythm between glazing and wall to improve its linear appearance and increase connection with its adjoining barn typology. The panel was not convinced by different material palettes for each section of the building.

Site and Access

The new hardstanding areas should be permeable and the development should incorporate SUDS to address the drainage from the considerable site gradient. A more porous and natural alternative to resin-bound gravel should also be considered for the car park hardstanding.

The Panel questions whether the applicant has considered how the sports users will arrive at the site, which should ideally be by public transport or bicycle.

Landscape and Sustainability

The Panel strongly encourages the applicant to develop a more holistic approach to the site, both in terms of biodiversity net gain, energy generation and commercial activity opportunities. Whilst the Panel is in support of sedum roofs to provide positive environmental benefits, there are still improvements needed to reach the appropriate standards of sustainability for a new build. Sedum roofs are not required if the whole site can be utilized more effectively to promote biodiversity.

Significant planting to the North of the site is highly welcome and recommended as this is the viewpoint where the existing and proposed developments will have the greatest visual impact. A wildflower meadow or tree planting will create varied opportunities for recreation and use by wedding parties, as well as a rich home for wildlife.

A clear strategy for biodiversity should be presented which evidences the maintenance of the wider site as well.

The sustainability ambitions of this new-build should be exemplary. The use of ground source heat pumps and embodied energy will increase the chances of this proposal being accepted on a site of this nature. The BREEAM rating should be 'Excellent' if a new building will be built and the sustainability approach should be explicitly presented as this is a key component in the approval of this proposal.

Summary

The Panel stresses the need for an exemplary approach to sustainability. Creating a woodland and meadow environment around the building will add to this greatly and will be welcomed by the Panel. It was stressed

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that an embodied energy approach will be key to gaining the support of the DRP.

A cohesive identity between the buildings must be reached, and different forms of massing should be explored for the building to sit comfortably within the landscape.

The ceremonial procession needs to be clearly defined in the architectural programme. The entrance to the site should also be re-addressed to create a fluid passage from external to internal spaces. This is particularly important due to the sensitive green belt setting and the opportunity to use natural surroundings to positively impact the experience of users and guests.

The activities of all users should be considered and designed for. The south side of the building should be addressed in terms of capturing sunlight and southern aspects and should be the drive for the orientation of building functions, particularly concerning the car park. Photo opportunities were suggested as a tool to frame architectural moments, which in turn will translate to specific building arrangements on site.

Overall, the Panel understands there will be changes to the layout and therefore cannot make final comments on it. An exploration of interstitial space is highly recommended and the Panel looks forward to seeing the potential of the natural landscape being maximised at the next review.

Yours Sincerely,



Katy Marks

Attendees:	Orla Murphy	Harrow Council (Head of Development Management/Review Manager)
	Esma Duzgun	Harrow Council (Review Coordinator)
	Nicola Rankin	Harrow Council (Principal Planner)
	Bettina Aneke	Harrow Council (East Team Leader)
	Krishan Pilch	Harrow Council (Principal Urban Design Officer)
	Katy Marks	Harrow DRP Chair
	Miranda MacLaren	Harrow DRP Member
	Tom Coward	Harrow DRP Member
	Roland Karthaus	Harrow DRP Member
	Sandip Ruperalia	Owner, Applicant
Ravi Ruperalia	Owner, Applicant	
Richard Henley	Director, hgh Consulting	
Jill Bell	Associate Director, hgh Consulting	
Adam Thornton	Director, 5Plus Architects	
Cathrin Beermann	Associate Director, 5Plus Architects	
Rose Perkins	Senior Landscape Consultant, Tyler Grange	
Cc:	Beverley Kuchar	Harrow Council (Chief Planning Officer)