

The Design Review Panel

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Site	Scarp House, land south of Sunningdale, Horsham Road, Steyning, BN44 3AA
Proposal	NPPF Paragraph 84 dwelling in the countryside
Local Authority	Horsham District Council
Applicant	SJD Projects
Planning Consultant	Axiom Planning
Architect/Lead Designer	Atelier de Linde Ltd
Landscape Architect	Joe Perkins Design
Review Date	3 rd July 2026

The Design Review Panel is an independent and impartial body comprised of multidisciplinary expert volunteers. The Panel provides constructive feedback on development proposals, ideally either at the pre-planning stage or alongside pre-application engagement with a local authority. The role of The Design Review Panel is to offer objective and professional insights to assist design teams and local authorities in improving the quality, sustainability and appropriateness of the development proposals. Each session brings together a tailored group of expert volunteers who are selected because of their specialist expertise and relevance to the project under review. Details of The Design Review Panel volunteer members can be seen on our website using the following link <https://www.designreviewpanel.co.uk/team>. For this session, the Panel included professional expertise in town planning, architecture and landscape architecture, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation from a range of professional perspectives.

This follow-up remote desktop design review was booked by Axiom Planning. This is the fourth time The Design Review Panel has reviewed this scheme. A previous in-person session incorporating a site visit was carried out on the 4th April 2025 and subsequent online reviews were held on the 26th November 2025 and 24th February 2026. This feedback document should be read in conjunction with the feedback documents issued following the previous review sessions.

The information presented for review is considered to have been clear and professional. This is welcomed by the Panel, and this presentation material is of benefit to the design review process.

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The Panel has been asked to assess the proposals against Paragraph 84 (e) of the National Planning Policy Framework, (NPPF), which states: -

“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.”***

Paragraph 139 of the NPPF states: -

“Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents which use visual tools such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to ...

...(b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.”

Paragraph 138 of the NPPF states: -

“Local planning authorities should ensure that they have access to, and make appropriate use of, tools and processes for assessing and improving the design of development. ... For assessing proposals there is a range of tools including workshops to engage the local community, design advice and review arrangements, and assessment frameworks such as Building for a Healthy Life ... In assessing applications, local planning authorities should have regard to the outcome from these processes, including any recommendations made by design review panels.”

Therefore, the Panel provides the following feedback: -

The Panel welcomes the design team’s continued engagement with the design review process. This is now the fourth review session for the scheme, and the Panel considers that this sustained engagement is clearly evident in the quality and maturity of the current proposal. The design team does not appear simply to have responded to individual comments in isolation. Rather, the scheme now reads as the product of an iterative process, with the landscape strategy, siting, architectural

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concept, arrival sequence, material approach and relationship between the building and landform becoming more coherent, more convincing and more clearly site-specific.

It is considered that the proposal now meets the high bar set by Paragraph 84(e) of the National Planning Policy Framework. In the Panel's view, the scheme is a truly outstanding and site-specific design response. It reflects the highest standards in architecture, helps to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas, significantly enhances its immediate setting, and is sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

The comments that follow are made in that context. They are intended to help refine, clarify and strengthen the final submission, and to assist the design team in presenting the quality of the proposal as clearly as possible to the local planning authority, consultees and decision-makers. The Panel does not consider these remaining comments to be matters which prevent the proposal from meeting the Paragraph 84(e) tests. They are points of refinement and presentation, directed towards improving an already strong proposal and ensuring that the final submission fully communicates the quality of the design response.

The Panel welcomes the further development of the landscape strategy. The landscape design now reads as arising from a comprehensive landscape baseline assessment, and the relationship between the house and its immediate setting is much clearer than in earlier iterations. The strategy remains complex, but that complexity now appears more purposeful and more closely related to the underlying landscape response, and provides a more coherent basis for demonstrating sensitivity to the defining characteristics of the local area.

It is considered that the landscape proposals respond positively to the Paragraph 84(e) tests. They address the characteristics of the local area and strengthen the relationship between the proposed house and its immediate setting. The landscape framework now appears capable of enhancing that setting, rather than simply accommodating the building within it. The proposal is also now clearer in the way it balances the more designed domestic space close to the house with the wider landscape beyond.

The ground modelling appears, at least in part, to arise from an intention to avoid removing material from the site. This is understood as a sustainable approach in principle and helps to explain some of the complexity in the proposed landform. The Panel suggests that this should be clearly explained in the final submission material, so that the modelling is understood as part of the landscape and environmental strategy rather than as an aesthetic gesture. The Panel also notes that this complexity requires careful handling through detailed design, implementation and future management, so that the intended relationship between the building, landform and wider landscape remains clear over time.

The clearer distinction now made between the domestic curtilage and the wider landscape is welcomed. The domestic curtilage now ends at the swimming pool edge, which the Panel considers to be a logical and helpful point of transition. This creates a clearer break between the domestic

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space associated with the house and the more naturalistic landscape beyond. The Panel considers that this responds positively to earlier discussion and strengthens the overall landscape structure. It also helps to avoid the wider landscape reading as an extended garden, which is important in maintaining the rural character and contextual sensitivity of the proposal.

The Panel considers that the proposed house is now more clearly presented as a unique and site-specific response. The submitted material provides substantial justification for the way in which the design responds to the landscape, and the Panel considers that the house is now convincingly located on the site. The scarp concept is more evident across the scheme, and the relationship between the building, the landform and the proposed material palette is stronger. These changes assist the proposal in demonstrating sensitivity to the defining landscape characteristics of the area and in showing how the scheme significantly enhances its immediate setting.

It is considered that the scheme is located correctly on the site and that the scarp concept now pervades the proposal. The relationship between building and landscape is substantially stronger, and the material approach assists in tying the house to its setting. The Panel also notes that the building now has a closer and more convincing relationship with the landform, which is central to the success of the concept. This is a significant step forward and is one of the reasons the Panel considers that the Paragraph 84(e) bar is now met.

The Panel welcomes the further explanation of what a scarp is and why this idea informs the design. However, the Panel suggests that the final submission material could still make the connection between the scarp concept and this specific site more direct. The information explains the broader idea of a scarp, but there remains scope to show more clearly how that idea moves from landscape observation, to site analysis, to design concept, and then into the particular form, section, materials and landscape treatment of the proposed house.

It may be helpful for the final design and access statement to include additional photographic references, diagrams or annotated views which explain the scarp idea in a simple and accessible way. The Panel notes that the material explaining the external walkways and carved paths appears clear and helpful. A similar level of clarity in relation to the scarp concept would strengthen the design narrative and make the architectural proposition easier to understand for those coming to the scheme without the benefit of the earlier review discussions.

It may be beneficial for the narrative around the built form to be tightened. The site analysis refers to local courtyard forms, arrival spaces and farmyard typologies. These references are useful, but they need to be handled carefully because the proposed dwelling is not a traditional inward-looking courtyard form. It is a more open, outward-facing residential composition. At the same time, the scheme now creates a form of entrance court between the house, the garage and the western boundary. The Panel suggests that the final documentation should explain more clearly how these references inform the proposal, and whether the courtyard idea relates primarily to arrival, enclosure, local precedent, landscape structure, or the organisation of the plan.

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The Panel notes that the drive and garage relationship is now improved. The garage, or car port, now has a clearer relationship with the house and the entrance sequence. Its geometry relates more closely to the main building, and its position within the swale helps it sit more comfortably within the landscape strategy. It is suggested that the garage, the vehicular entrance court and the arrival sequence could now be incorporated into the key figure-ground and concept diagrams. This may help to show that the arrival arrangement is part of the overall design proposition rather than a separate or secondary component.

The Panel suggests that some further refinement of the parking arrangement may be helpful. The two additional external parking spaces appear rather orthogonal and sit less comfortably within the entrance forecourt and landscape concept. They risk detracting from the arrival experience and from the more carefully integrated relationship between the house, the garage and the swale. It may be helpful to test whether these spaces can be softened, repositioned, or better absorbed into the landscape so that they feel less separate from the wider design language.

It is also suggested that the approach view could be further refined. In the current view, the foreground element appears to read more as a wall than as a scarp. This is an important distinction, because the scarp concept is central to the proposal. If the first impression is of a wall-like object, the clarity of the main scarp wall behind may be reduced. It may be helpful to explore whether this element can be treated more as grassed banking, allowing the primary scarp building wall to read with greater clarity and allowing the approach sequence to feel more closely embedded in the landscape.

The Panel considers that the overall building composition is now much closer to achieving the level of coherence being sought. The scheme has a clearer conceptual direction, and the scarp idea now has a stronger presence across the proposal. However, the Panel suggests that some further distillation would help the architecture read with greater clarity. The tapering tail in the plan remains uncertain, and it may be helpful for the design team to test whether this element is essential to the composition or whether a simpler arrangement would produce a clearer architectural outcome.

The larger of the principal building elements remains quite rectilinear and orthogonal when read against the more irregular and landscape-derived parts of the scheme. The issue is not the presence of a larger element in itself, but the way in which that element relates to the rest of the composition. It may be helpful to refine the plan form, roof form, material treatment or relationship with the ground so that this part of the building feels more clearly connected to the same conceptual language as the rest of the proposal.

The Panel welcomes the reduction in the number of fracture points. This helps to simplify the architectural expression and gives the building greater clarity. However, the remaining fracture point still appears capable of further refinement. The Panel understands that a fracture at the entrance could have a clear architectural purpose and could create a memorable moment of arrival. At present, however, the additional fracture limb appears to conflict with the main flint wall panels rather than clarify the entrance. It may be helpful for this element to be more clearly expressed as part of

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the entry sequence, possibly through a different material treatment, so that it reads as an intentional architectural moment rather than as an unresolved part of the main wall composition.

It is noted that the eastern swales now have a more relaxed landscape character and provide a positive contrast with the geometry of the building. The relationship between the swimming pool and the wider landscape, however, still requires some care. The Panel accepts the pool edge as a logical point of transition between the domestic curtilage and the wider landscape, but the form and alignment of the pool do not yet fully relate either to the rectilinear building form or to the freer landscape treatment beyond. It may be helpful for the landscape to blend further into the open C-shaped space enclosed by the building. If the pool remains a formal element, it may sit more comfortably if it relates more directly to the main living space and presents a narrower intervention into the wider landscape. Alternatively, a more informal shape may allow it to sit more naturally within the landscape strategy.

It is suggested that the fenestration and elevation strategy may benefit from further simplification. The overall pattern of openings does not yet read with complete consistency, either externally or from within the enclosed space of the building. The east and south elevations, and particularly the east gable, appear to combine solid walling, glazing, screen elements and frame articulation in a way that could be more clearly ordered. The Panel suggests that the openings within the scarp walls may read more convincingly as a series of simple vertical expressions. The internal south and east elevations may also benefit from a clearer vertical order, with the movable screens providing variation and animation without the base composition becoming too complicated.

The Panel suggests that the roof overhang to the upper volume containing the main living spaces may benefit from being explored further. A deeper angular overhang may provide a more generous covered terrace, strengthen the relationship between inside and outside, and offer improved shelter and shading to the lower-level glazing on the east and south elevations. This may also help to extend the angular language of the building in a way that feels purposeful and connected to the wider architectural composition.

The Panel notes that the internal layout is improved and now has greater clarity. However, a small number of points remain capable of further refinement. The large bathroom window appears to require further thought in relation to privacy, purpose and external composition. The atrium space at the corner, or knuckle, of the plan would also benefit from a clearer relationship with the stair void and corridor. It may be helpful for this space to resolve as a more coherent kite-shaped arrangement, which is then expressed through the roof as a simple single form. This would help the internal organisation, roof expression and external architectural language to work more closely together.

The Panel suggests that further contextual visual material remains useful. Views towards the site and house, including views from the road, would help to demonstrate how the proposal sits within its wider landscape. This is particularly relevant because the building has a substantial presence and different faces of the scheme are likely to be experienced from different viewpoints. Clearer

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material showing how the house appears from these wider views would help to demonstrate the relationship between massing, landscape setting and contextual fit.

The additional information relating to sustainability and environmental performance is welcomed. This provides helpful clarification and shows that the design team is giving these matters active consideration. However, the Panel suggests that the final material may benefit from stating the intended sustainability ambition more clearly. For a Paragraph 84(e) proposal, it may be beneficial for the environmental performance target to be set out in a way that is easy to understand and clearly connected to the design decisions. This may include a clear statement of intent around the performance standard being pursued, whether that is Net Zero, Passivhaus Plus, or another appropriately ambitious and evidenced benchmark.

The Panel suggests that the sustainability and construction narrative could be more visibly embedded in the architecture. The house is now clearly presented as site-specific, and the landscape response is well justified. The next step is to make equally clear how sustainability, construction method and technical performance inform the form, orientation, glazing, shading, material strategy and detailing of the building. This may help the proposal demonstrate not only that it responds to the landscape, but also that its environmental and construction approach forms an integral part of its claim to exceptional design quality.

Taken as a whole, the Panel considers that the proposal now presents a convincing Paragraph 84(e) design response. The fourth review session demonstrates the value of continued design review engagement, with the scheme now presenting a clear landscape basis, a strong architectural concept, a coherent relationship with its setting, and a persuasive site-specific identity.

The Panel considers that the proposal meets the specific tests of Paragraph 84(e) of the National Planning Policy Framework. In the Panel's view, the scheme is capable of being considered truly outstanding, of reflecting the highest standards in architecture, of helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas, of significantly enhancing its immediate setting, and of being sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area. The comments and suggestions contained in this feedback, are intended to assist the design team in refining, clarifying and presenting the final submission. They should not be read as reservations about whether the Paragraph 84(e) threshold is reached. The Panel's overall view is that the proposal has reached the high design-quality bar required by Paragraph 84(e) of the National Planning Policy Framework.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS, (to be read in conjunction with the above)

- The Panel welcomes the design team's continued engagement through four review sessions.
- The Panel considers that the proposal now meets the high bar set by Paragraph 84(e) of the NPPF.

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- The Panel considers the scheme to be a truly outstanding and site-specific design response.
- The Panel considers that the scheme reflects the highest standards in architecture.
- The Panel considers that the scheme helps to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas.
- The Panel considers that the scheme significantly enhances its immediate setting.
- The Panel considers that the scheme is sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.
- The remaining comments are suggestions for refinement, clarification and presentation.
- The Panel welcomes the further development of the landscape strategy.
- The landscape strategy now reads as clearly informed by a comprehensive baseline assessment.
- The landscape proposals strengthen the relationship between the house and its immediate setting.
- The swimming pool edge provides a logical transition between domestic curtilage and wider landscape.
- The ground modelling may benefit from clearer explanation within the landscape and sustainability narrative.
- The house is now more convincingly located on the site.
- The scarp concept is now more clearly present across the proposal.
- The relationship between building, landform and material palette is much stronger.
- The scarp narrative may benefit from clearer diagrams, annotated views or photographic references.
- The courtyard, arrival and farmyard references may benefit from clearer explanation.
- The drive and garage relationship is improved and better connected to the entrance sequence.
- The garage and arrival court could be shown more clearly in the concept diagrams.
- The additional external parking spaces may benefit from further landscape integration.
- The approach view may benefit from refinement so the scarp concept reads more clearly.
- The building composition is now more coherent, although further distillation may be helpful.
- The tapering tail and larger rectilinear element may benefit from further refinement.
- The reduction in fracture points is welcomed.
- The remaining fracture point may benefit from clearer expression as part of the entrance sequence.
- The eastern swales provide a positive contrast with the geometry of the building.
- The relationship between the swimming pool, C-shaped space and wider landscape may benefit from further refinement.
- The fenestration and elevation strategy may benefit from simplification.
- The east and south elevations may benefit from a clearer and more consistent order.
- The roof overhang may benefit from further exploration to improve shelter, shading and spatial connection.
- The internal layout is improved and has greater clarity.
- The bathroom window and internal knuckle may benefit from further refinement.

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- Further contextual views would help demonstrate how the proposal sits within the wider landscape.
- The additional sustainability and environmental performance information is welcomed.
- The final submission may benefit from a clearer statement of sustainability ambition.
- The sustainability and construction narrative could be more visibly embedded in the architecture.
- Taken as a whole, the Panel considers that the proposal presents a convincing Paragraph 84(e) design response.
- The comments and suggestions in this feedback do not alter the Panel's view that the Paragraph 84(e) threshold has been reached.

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