



Design review helped to win approval for this new dwelling in the countryside. The support of the South West Design Review Panel (SWDRP) emboldened the planning authority to grant consent under a special exemption to justify a new dwelling.



East facing elevation



Project plan

The Site and Scheme Outline - The new dwelling will be on a virgin site in the boundary woodland of Marston Park, a listed historic park. A short distance away is a listed farmhouse, now a guesthouse. This will be enlarged and the current manager's house there is to be converted to guest rooms, hence the need for a replacement dwelling.

The wider scheme involved a new, well-screened car park, a re-routed drive, new gardens and courtyard, habitat enhancements, land drainage improvements and associated landscaping works. The setting of the guesthouse and its relationship to the Park will be improved.

The new house will form part of the Lighthouse Estate of guesthouse and related facilities, but being in open countryside could be justified in planning terms only as an exemption to normal policy. (PARAGRAPH 55 OF THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK).

The Review Process - The scheme was brought to the Panel at the suggestion of the local authority who wanted an expert opinion on whether the design was of sufficient merit to justify an exemption. The review, preceded by a site visit and involving a multi-disciplinary panel of three, had two stages. James U'Dell, the relevant Case Officer at Mendip District Council, attended the first meeting.

The client and design team modified their proposals following the Panel's advice about allowing the landscape to sweep up to the new house, the clarity of the house design, and portraying the wide range of benefits the scheme as a whole would bring.



'The clear guidance provided by the SWDRP enabled us to ascertain whether the scheme was truly innovative or exceptional in order to comply with Paragraph 55. It was clear from their support that there were exceptional circumstances for the creation of this isolated dwelling in a location where development is strictly controlled.'

*James U'Dell - SENIOR PLANNER
MENDIP DISTRICT COUNCIL*



Hand rendered drawing of the project

The Panel's Recommendations - The Panel considered that the scheme met the strict requirements of Paragraph 55. It had the exceptional quality demanded, it significantly enhanced its immediate setting, and it was sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area. SWDRP welcomed the house as a demonstration that good, strong, contemporary architecture can sit harmoniously in a rural and heritage setting. That it met the Passivhaus standard and would largely be made from local materials was also noted.

The scheme also met Paragraph 55 in terms of heritage assets - the scheme as a whole *'will help preserve and enhance the listed building and help preserve and enhance part of the registered historic park'*. The Panel added that this was a well-rooted family business with an ethos around health, wellbeing and sustainability that needed to grow. It would provide additional accommodation while upholding heritage assets and enhancing the local scene. *'We see a triple bottom line: economic, social and environmental benefits'*.

Easing the Path to a Consent - Mendip District Council gave consent. The officer's report said: *'Given the strong support from the SWDRP for the proposed scheme, it is considered that the development complies with several of the relevant provisions of Paragraph 55 of the NPPF'*.

CLIENT: Lighthouse Property Estates.
 DESIGN TEAM: CaSA Architects.
 SEED Landscape Architects.
 PLANNING AUTHORITY: Mendip District Council.
 PLANNING APPLICATION: 2015/2897/FUL
 Approved March 2016.
 HOUSE: Single house under Paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for new isolated dwellings in the countryside.
 WIDER SCHEME: Conversion of existing dwelling and office to create ten guest letting rooms; a new spa facility; new entrance hall and guest lounge; new car park and associated landscaping works.