

DESIGN STATEMENT

THORNWOOD REACH, WEENSLAND ROAD HAWICK

The Site

The site at Thornwood Lodge is located within the Hawick settlement boundary. It comprises 1440 m² of ground along the east bank of the Teviot and extends an additional 500 m² to the middle of the Teviot river.

In Scottish law, when a river is a non-navigable waterway as it is here, the landowner generally owns the land beneath the water to the exact centre of the waterway.

The river edge is a continuous stone retaining wall approximately 3 metres high, with a post and wire fence. The river is a designated SSSI with otters, salmon, trout and a rich variety of birds and wildlife.

The 48 metre frontage on Weensland Road is lined with mixed hedging. The ground, formerly a kitchen garden to what is now Mansfield House hotel, slopes down to the Teviot River, comprises grass with a few fruit trees and vegetable beds.

The surroundings are predominantly housing, built over the last 150 years. To the south is a terrace of c1860s stone houses, to the north the single storey Thornwood Lodge, and across the street two storey c1930s linked houses and c1970s infill housing around the entrance to the Mansfield Hotel.

The site has a lapsed outline planning consent for 3 detached dwellings Ref 09/00547/OUT. The planning consent is dated 15th December 2009.

The Proposal

Thornwood Reach will comprise four high-performance, low-energy 4 bedroom houses contained in two blocks, with shared parking courts and individual northwest facing gardens overlooking the river.

The total building footprint will be a reduction on the three houses in the 2009 consented scheme.

The houses are designed to address the challenge of global warming and urgent need for more sustainable low carbon homes in the 21st century, as well as for comfort

and convenience. The houses will be on three levels, with the lowest level dug into the slope of the hill so as to appear two storey from the street. Gardens will have turfed lawns, sandstone patios and beech hedging.

Two new 5 metre wide accesses will be formed through the hedge from Weensland Road with dropped kerbs. Each shared parking court will have four unallocated gravel surfaced parking spaces and plenty of turning room. Cut material will be re-used to build up the parking court to pavement level.

Individual timber, stone and glass pedestrian bridges will cross the 2.8 metre high timber crib retaining wall covered with trailing plants and lower paved areas and lead directly to sheltered entrance doors.

Open-plan lower level full-height sliding doors from the livingrooms will overlook the gardens and river. Kitchens will have quartz islands, ample pantry storage and separate laundry rooms.

Entrance levels will contain west facing sittingrooms with balcony access and master bedroom suite. The upper level will contain three more bedrooms and narrow balconies, emphasising the connection between inside and outside, and facilitating maintenance.

The bespoke timber frame houses are designed and engineered to minimise embodied energy and increase speed of construction. Vertical square edge Siberian larch cladding boards of three widths used in random pattern on the upper floors will be sealed to protect their warm natural colour.

Silver grey window frames, parapet cappings and flashing bands will enliven the elevations. Light powder coated aluminium panels at the lower levels will incorporate artwork by renowned Scottish artist and educator Jonathon Gibbs, inspired by the themes of water, flora and fauna.

The roof will comprise 16 black solar panels set in two 40 degree inclined frames along the principal facades, with a 20 m² moss roof in between. The carbon capture of the moss in each roof will be equivalent to several hundred trees. The moss also attenuates peak rainfall. Syphonic drainage will be designed to accommodate increased future rainfall.

High-performance low-maintenance composite windows will have exceptional levels of insulation and airtightness to passivhaus standard.

The houses will incorporate state-of-the-art technology - all electric programmable space and water heating, electric car charging points and 100% LED lighting to further minimise carbon emissions.

Planning Issues

Pre-application discussion was carried out with Stuart Herkes on planning matters, Ian Chalmers on flood risk and Paul Grigor on access and parking.

A flood risk assessment of the site was carried out for the 2009 planning application using the current 1 in 200 year methodology. SEPA maps and the most up to date Hawick Flood Prevention Scheme maps, incorporating climate change, were examined.

In the worst case scenario the maps indicate there will be some overtopping of the existing retaining wall along the river frontage within the gardens, but with rising slope the buildings will be entirely outwith the flood plain. Egress from each house is on the middle (street) level.

A small part of the existing frontage hedge on Weensland Road falls within the road safety sightlines at each proposed access. The hedge will be cleared within these areas, grassed over and additional planting carried out on the parking court side along the entire hedgerow.

The parking and vehicle manoeuvring space within the entrance courts has been increased above the conventional standard to allow safe and comfortable parking and access to the houses. Barriers, bollards and kerbs will be used to ensure occupant safety and prevent damage to property.

The applicant is agreeable to payment of contributions for affordable housing and play equipment prior to occupancy with a S75 agreement.