

COLDINGHAM CABIN

DESIGN STATEMENT

August 2022



This application is seeking permission for a single storey 2-bedroom house on the site immediately North of Sea Neuk in Coldingham Bay, forming part of the old Sheiling care home recreational grounds.

The proposals, pictured here, are discreet and embedded in the hill-side, so as to have no impact on the neighbouring properties views or recreational space.

From the beach the position and height of the proposals have been carefully considered so as to be hidden from view almost entirely.

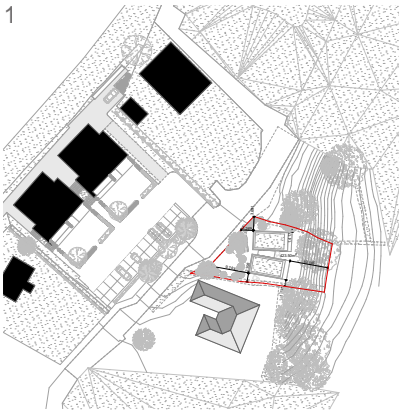
Where the proposals are visible, they are broken up into smaller scale elements, which are similar to the outhouses, garden pavilions and beach huts which pepper the coastal slope of the bay and above the high water mark on the beach.

Clad with natural vertically orientated timber boarding and a sedum roof, the proposals are intended to recede into the natural background and landscape.



Site Appraisal

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The site originally formed part of the Sheiling Care Home grounds and is split over the road serving Coldingham Sands. The applicant is the owner of both sites and under planning application 13/00299/FUL demolished the dilapidated care home building and constructed The Bay, an eight 2-bed apartment development split across two villas, completed in 2020.

The Bay is a minimal design referencing the iconic art deco coastal buildings around the UK, with white rendered elevations and panoramic, horizontally orientated openings, with balconies running along the frontage.



The application site sits on the prow of the hill on the coastal side of the road and enjoys a spectacular view across the bay. To the south of the site there is an existing brick dwelling (Sea Neuk) - its large roof the only visible part of the building when viewed from the road, as it is both sunken into the hill and well concealed by a large hedgerow. The site is raised up from the road by approximately a metre of fill and on either side existing hedgerows offer a degree of privacy and containment. To the east the hill falls sharply away to eventually meet up with the beach below. There are a scattering of self-seeded trees and wild plants that form the landscape of the hillside.



The settlement of Coldingham Sands is a linear development along the bay, the top of the coastline, with the occasional house sitting down the slope; Sea Neuk and The Pavilion.

1 - Site Plan

2 - Aerial view of the site showing The Bay development (blue boundary line) and the proposed site (red boundary line).

3 - Aerial view across the Bay looking at the settlement of Coldingham Sands

The Bay

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The Bay, delivered by the same applicant, contains eight apartments within two villa structures on the site of the old Sheiling nursing home and were all sold off plan before the project was completed; reflecting the popularity of the project and the demand for coastal housing in this part of Scotland .



The steeply sloping site and separation of the two villas has allowed each of the apartments their own private front door and terraces or gardens each with views out across the bay. This terracing of the forms breaks down the buildings mass and skyline whilst relating to the scale of the surrounding properties.



Whitewash render refers to the Edwardian seaside villas, and the more recent Art Deco beach-side houses built around the coast of the UK. The simple horizontal facades emulate the lines of modernist lidos such as Tarlair Lido in Banffshire, which in turn were vaguely nautical in their design - long horizontal terracing with guard rails similar to that of the classic ocean liner of the time.

The proposals respect the scale of the existing neighbouring dwellings, responding to the change in scale from the larger house to the north and to the smaller-scaled dwelling to the south. Simple, strong forms and contemporary in expression, these white rendered buildings make a positive contribution to the context and both reflect and enhance the existing 'seaside' quality of the settlement.

4 - View of front elevations showing large horizontal openings providing good views out across the bay.

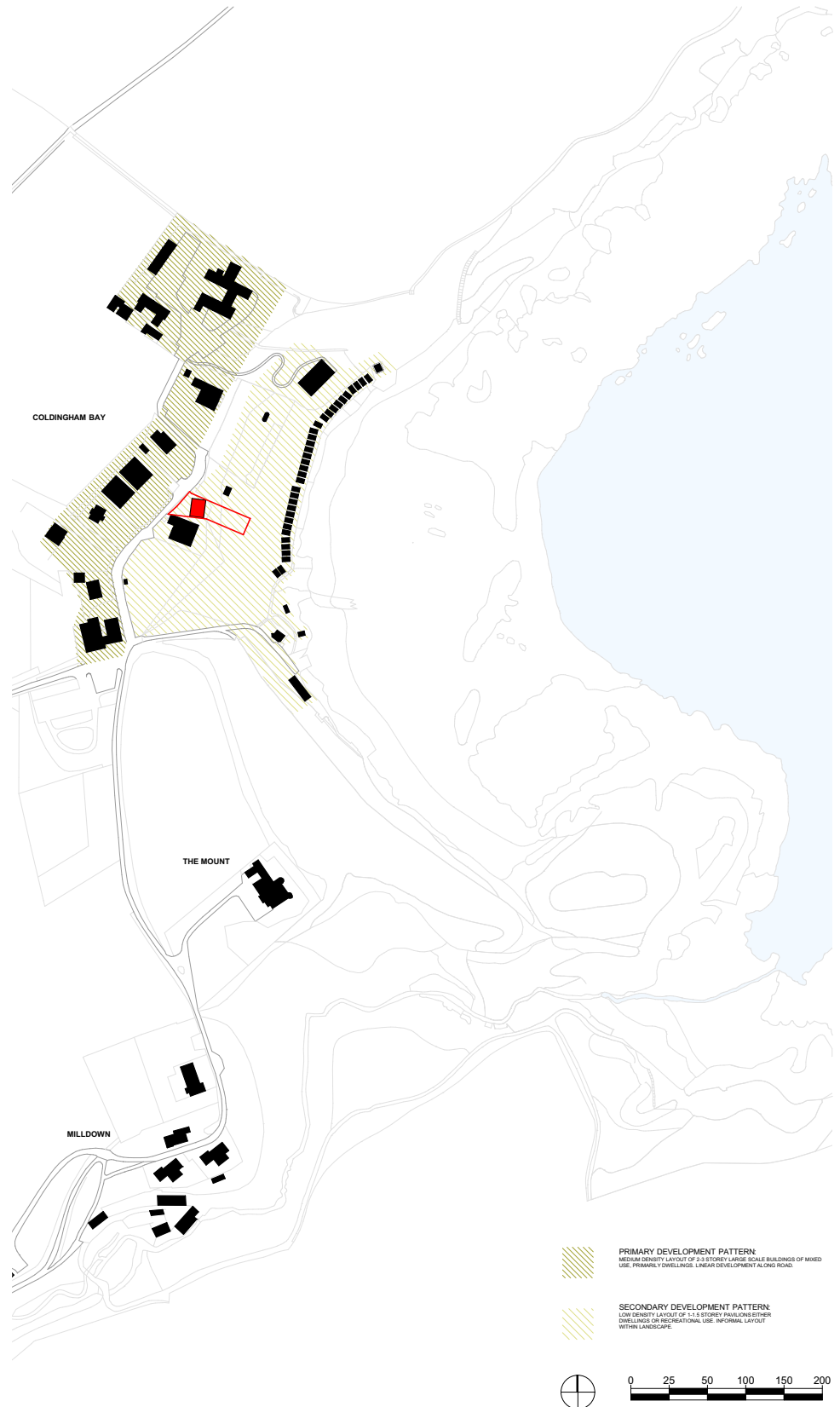
5 - The two villas viewed from the street, and although each unit contains 4 apartments they appear to be single houses.

6 - Overview aerial of the bay with the villas in the foreground. The massing and large cut-away openings makes the proposal feel smaller than the prominent surrounding Victorian houses.

The architectural expression eschews any pastiche or historicism, as this will always result in an unauthentic architecture, but instead explores the use of traditional materials and appropriate form and scale in a contemporary way such that the project sits sensitively within its surrounding context and reflects the genius-loci of place.

The proposal has been carefully considered in terms of scale and overall footprint, ensuring both generous amenity spaces for the new apartments, and careful consideration to massing and positioning on the site.

Design Strategy



The primary development pattern, of which The Bay forms part of, consists of large, quite tall, prominent villas sitting higher on the coastal slope.

The adjacent diagram demonstrates that this new proposals for a smaller, more fragmented massing, sitting high up the slope to the beach reads as a intermediate between the scale of the houses and outbuildings to the beach huts within the secondary development pattern.

From the adjacent houses, the street and the beach, the proposals are nearly invisible. This has been achieved by making the building single storey, set half a storey down from the street level and kept as high up the slope towards the road as possible.

The existing scrub and coastal shrubbery on the site is maintained, carved out only for the footprint of the proposals and a small terrace, meaning that from the beach the building is concealed behind them, yet the view from the proposals of the sea is uninterrupted.

From the street side the semi-submerged building is not visible through the hedgerow planting, which would be continued from Sea Neuk (south of the site) to the gardens of Ebbastrand (north), enforcing the feeling of coastal edge to the east of the road through Coldingham Bay.

Design Principles

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The proposals are for a building that is discretely and sensitively positioned in the landscape, that is simple in plan, construction and detail - a design that is contemporary in its architectural language but sensitive to its context.

The applicant is applying to build a single storey two bedroom dwelling on the site. The brief is for an open-plan living, dining and kitchen space that can open up to a terrace overlooking the bay.



By carefully designing the buildings to be constructed off-site, the effect on the neighbours and ecology is kept to an absolute minimum.

A Pre-Planning Application was made on this site for a larger 2-storey house (20/00758/PREAPP). The proposals under this application are significantly reduced. It is single storey, and tucked into the slope so that it is concealed from the road and neighbouring properties. The design is also split, to allow pre-fabrication, but also to break up the overall mass of the building, making it closer to the scale of the beach huts and outhouses on the shore than the large Victorian houses immediately around it.



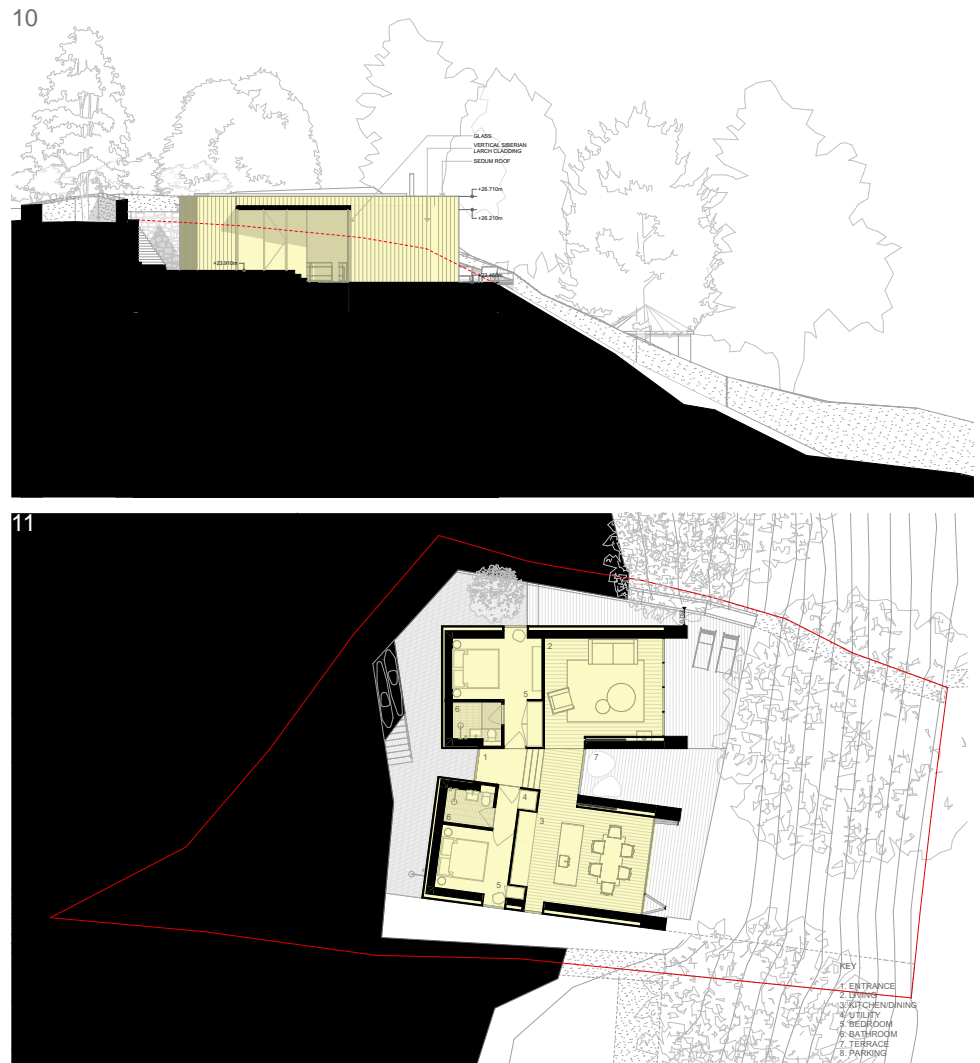
The landscaping is loose and natural. The street side is thick hedging, which links the gap across the site with the other dense hedgerows, although it would be maintained to keep the height below eye level of a pedestrian, allowing sea views across the top. The beach side is proposed to be left as the natural scrub of the existing hillside.

7 - The beach huts on the front pictured against the backdrop of the coastal slope gardens of Dunlaverock house which sits atop the hill.

8 - The proposals viewed from the path in front of the beach huts. The building is concealed from view behind the existing shrubbery and planting and appears in scale more like the garden pavilions of the big houses at the top of the hill; Ebbastrand, Dunlaverock and St Abb's Haven.

9 - The proposals viewed from the street between The Bay and The Gegan, just in front of Sea Neuk. The green sedum planted roof is all that is visible and the hedgerow in front links the gardens of Ebbastrand with Sea Neuk with greenery.

Proposed Design



10 - Cross Section showing the relationship to the street and to the sloped terrain. The pre-fab construction allows the units to be dropped onto a pre-prepared base minimising site works which are recognised to be disruptive and contentious.

11 - The plan layout uses two identical pre-fab units which each contain a bedroom, a shower room and a living space; one the sitting room, the other the kitchen dining room. The splay allows the volumes to feel more informal, like the beach huts, but also creates a sense of arrival at the entrance, framing and opening out to the view across the bay.

Our design strategy is to propose a very simple and compact plan and volume on the site.

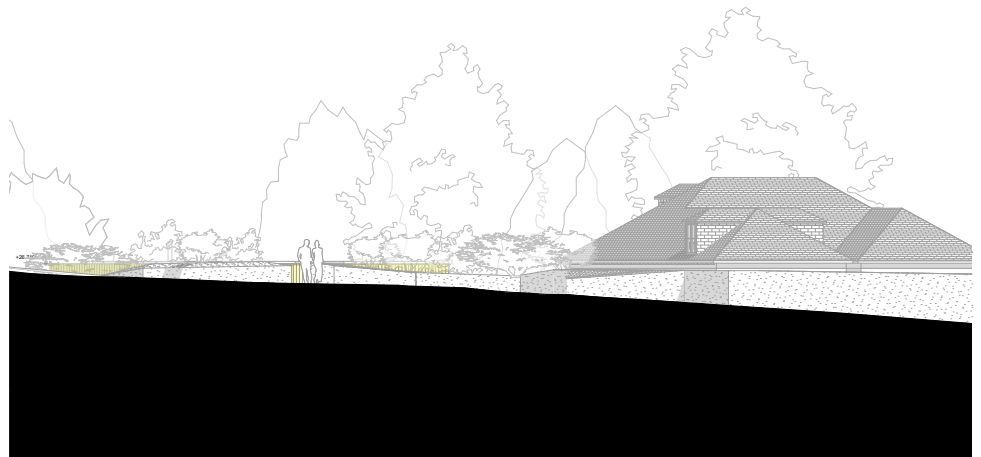
The proposal is a single-storey volume with a flat roof with sedum and concealed from the street. A stair descends down between thick hedge planting to a small courtyard space, from which the house is entered.

The two blocks of the house are more closed to the back, containing the bedrooms and the bathrooms, then open to the view across the bay to the east where the living room and kitchen/dining space are positioned. These spaces open out onto a timber-decked veranda which is carved out of the thick coastal vegetation, which will naturally layer and hang over the edges of the deck and building to conceal it from the beach and soften the edges, bedding the house into the landscape.

The front facade is single-storey and discrete with natural timber cladding. The separation of the blocks means the one building reads as 2 smaller scale pieces, similar to garden pavilions or the beach huts on the shore. The single glazed element between them is the entrance, which opens to the sea view beyond.

The whole arrangement is set back from the road both to allow space for two off-street parking spaces behind a thick hedge and a gate, which is not only discreet but links the site to the adjacent gardens on either side, providing soft landscaping at the boundary edge.

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12 - Drawing of street elevation. The combination of the continuous hedgerow planting across the site and the stepping of the section minimises the presence of the proposals on the bay.

13 - Rendering of street view. The sedum roof blends with the surrounding foliage of the coastal slope, forming an uninterrupted foreground to the sea view beyond.



The east facade is largely glazed to take advantage of the spectacular views to the sea. The existing trees, shrubbery and boundaries are retained to maintain the existing character of the site.

The appearance of the proposals are discreet and small in scale. The position of the building frontage is dug into the site and set back from the slope line. The perspective means that the frontage is not visible from down the slope.

Positioned between Sea Neuk to the left and the garden pavilions of Ebbastrand and Dunlaverock the proposals address this change in scale and material.



14 - Drawing of beach elevation with context. Extensive glazing takes advantage of the views across the bay, as the proposals are basically single aspect.

15 - Rendering of beach elevation with context. Splayed boxes, of the size required to be pre-fabricated, but also related to the size of the surrounding garden pavilions.

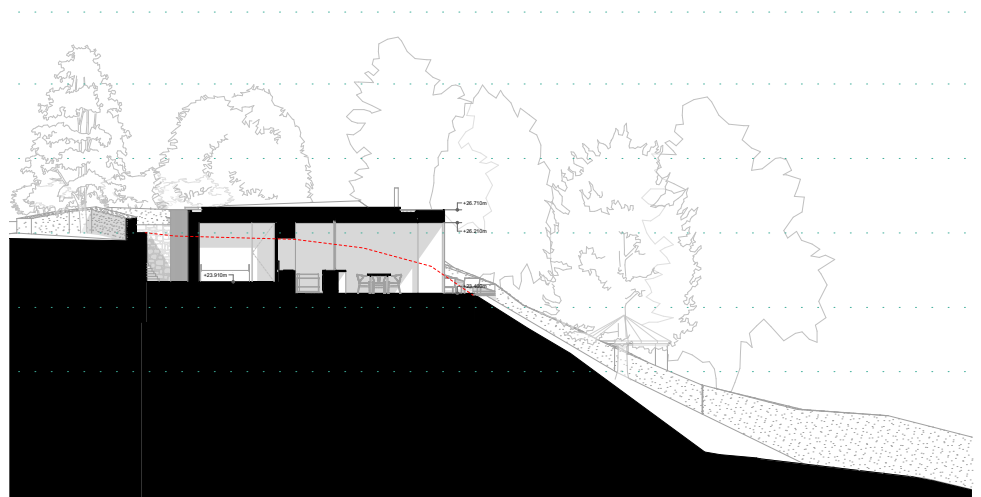


At first glance it would appear that the proposal is digging into the existing site quite dramatically. However this is misleading - the first point to make is that the site currently has a large amount of land-fill and therefore does not accurately reflect the 'general' terrain of this location. A more accurate comparison should be made with the neighbouring house, Sea Neuk, which shows that the base of the sea front elevation is at +23.400m datum and that this corresponds with our proposals.

By proposing a pre-fab unit the preparatory works and services can be carried out quickly and easily without materials needing to be stored on the site. A small amount of retention is required, always more than 1m from the footway and carriageway, which forms a stepped platform upon which the pre-fab elements would be able to be positioned.

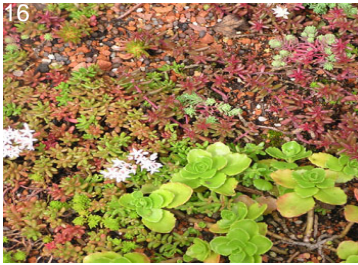
Site works would be minimised to site preparation, installation of services, installation of pre-fab elements, interior finishes and landscaping.

Cross Section showing position of current terrain against proposed building profile.



Materials

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The design of the dwelling is intended to be of the same language and detailing as for The Bay project so that there is a clear and simple relationship between the two sites.

However, in order to clearly distinguish between the developments on the West of the road and those on the East the proposed materials differ from The Bay to link the proposals more closely to the smaller, more informal structures on the slope.



The proposals are simple using as few materials as possible and entirely natural in origin.

One cladding material for the walls, a natural timber boarding, one for the roofs, sedum blanket, one for the retaining walls, local whinstone dykes and as much glazing as possible, where possible, to take advantage of the views in this unique location.



The beach facing terraces repeat the timber boarding from the cladding and the sunken courtyards to the rear between the retaining walls using gravel in similar greys to the whinstone walls.



A reduced palette of natural muted materials blends the proposals into the landscape. Sinking the building into the landscape means that the roof is much more visible from the street, and so the sedum extends the relationship of the natural materials to the surrounding planting and landscape.

15 - Sedum roof

16 - Timber clad walls (natural larch or cedar)

17 - Drystone retaining wall (Whinstone)

18 - Gravel paths (grey)



The proposals are intended to be pre-fabricated using sustainable sources of timber for both internal and external cladding and for the structure, using SIPS (structurally Insulated Panels). The internal lining is in larger panels, and could be a veneered board or a plywood. The external cladding needs to be robust, a cedar or larch treated so as to age naturally, and would be narrower boards set vertically to align with the trees surrounding the site.



Landscaping

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19 - View from the slope looking back up to the proposals. The design has been carefully considered to look and feel more like a garden structure; pavilion or summer house, lost in the foliage of the slope.

20 - Aerial view looking from the south towards Dunlavrock. Keeping the existing boundary conditions and setting the proposals back from them means that the foliage of the existing landscape can be enhanced, flowing between the proposals and the neighbouring plots.

We envisage that the existing character of the hillside is retained and enhanced. We do not anticipate any 'garden' plants being introduced but, moreover, the existing wild planting is reinstated and enhanced. Likewise we intend to keep the two trees immediately below the house, which we believe will offer a further degree of privacy and screening from the beach.

Conclusion

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Although the The Bay apartments and these proposals are separate projects they are conceived as part of the same architectural family. They both respond to the steep topography stepping back to allow for terraces, and in so doing helping to reduce the overall massing when seen from both the road and the distant views.

They are both unapologetically contemporary in design - using east-facing glazing and terraces to maximise the wonderful views of the bay.

Where they differ greatly is impact. The Bay sits in line with the large Victorian Villas across the top of the hill around Coldingham Bay, silhouetted against the sky when viewed from the beach. The proposed dwelling is subdued, using natural materials and much smaller in scale, it is concealed within the site, visible only from a few locations.

We firmly believe that this proposal will prove to be an exemplar of good design in this unique and wonderful location and will prove to be a very positive addition to the existing context.

We believe we have demonstrated that the new proposal respects and enhances the existing character of the site, that the overall development is in keeping with the general scale and density of existing developments and that it will enhance the natural landscape in which it sits.



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ADDENDUM to DESIGN STATEMENT

January 2023

The proposed development is contrary to Local Development Plan 2016 policy HD2 (Housing in the Countryside) and EP14 (Coastline) in that the site is not well related to the Coldingham Sands building group and the building group has no further capacity for expansion within the current plan period. The development would result in unacceptable harm to Coldingham Sands' sense of place and would cause unacceptable cumulative impact to the character of the building group and the undeveloped coast.

1860

No development in Bay. Milldown (shown in very bottom of map extract) with Mill on burn is shown. Access to Bay via track in position of current road.



1890

Sea Neuk first house developed along bay with St Vedas and The Mount.



1910

Further development at St Abb's Haven and Dunlavrock. Settlement pattern begins to show using buildable land between cliff / coastal slope and sloping field.

1950

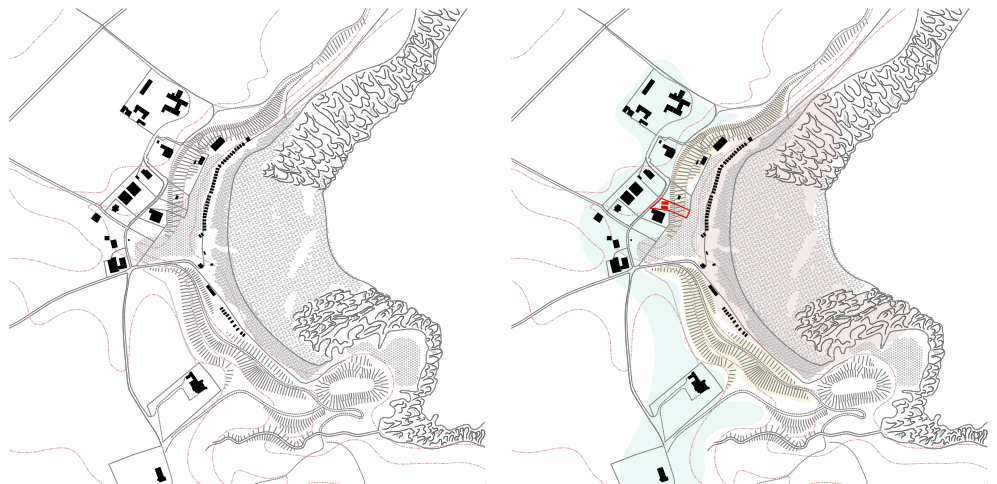
Expansion of Haven development and further expansion of settlement.

2020

Sheds on beach edge are shown, although these date much further back, possibly even before the 1950s map. Denser more consolidated settlement development.

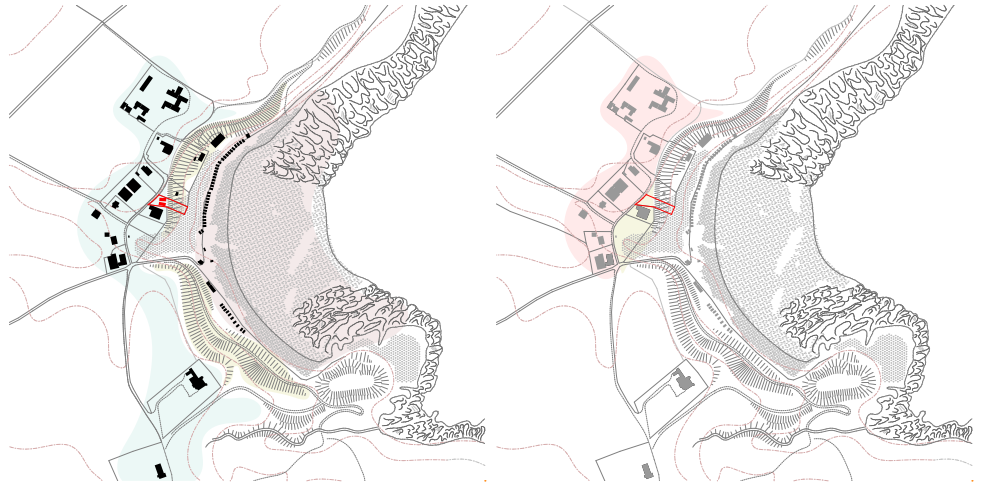
Proposal

The proposed cabin sits on top of the cliff in a flat part of terrain. The colouring on the map shows the key elements of the bay: settlement, cliff / coastal slope, beach. The houses sit in the settlement area, nothing generally on the cliffs and temporary beach hut structures mainly on the beach.



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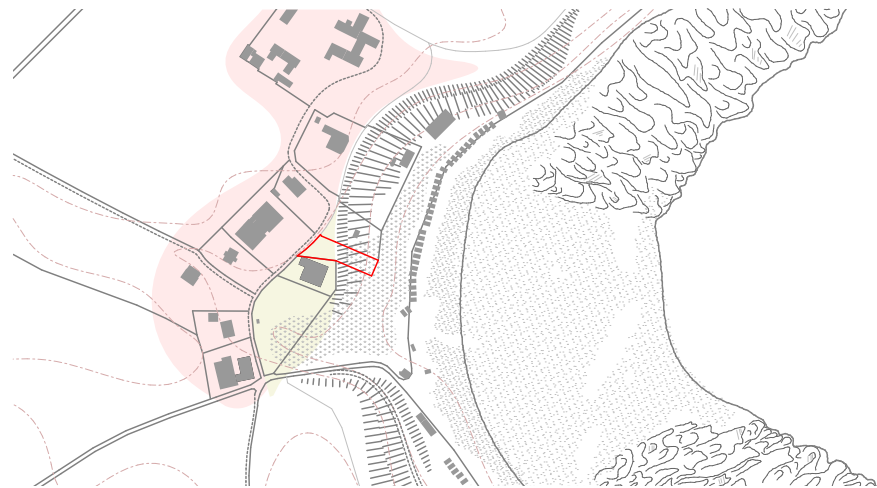


Settlement

The position of the first dwelling in the bay, Sea Neuk, and the position of the access road, has separated parts of the settlement.

In reading the context as beach, slope, settlement as portrayed in the first diagram and the morphology of the settlement, the area highlighted in yellow on the coast side of the road is defined as part of the settlement.

The ownership and division of the various dwelling plots and gardens in relation to the position of the slope / cliffs limits the extent of the area on the coast side of the road that can be considered as part of the settlement. Two properties fall into this, Sea Neuk and the application site.



Context

Although the main typology across the bay are larger villa type structures of varying styles, the proposals are to conceal a small dwelling in amongst the settlement which is discreet both when viewed from the road and from the beach.

The scale of the two splayed elements is derived from the original dwelling in the bay; Sea Neuk.

In particular the arrangement of the 3 bays: window, doorway, window which echoes the two splayed timber boxes with the opening between. Further to that the openings within the timber boxes facing the beach are based on the 4 bay openings of Sea Neuk: 2 large window panes and shutters either side, are both proportionately comparable with the proposals.

This reference means that where the proposals are visible, which is only from a limited series of locations, even though they are obscured by the retained existing foliage and planting, there is a dialogue between the oldest building in the bay and this, proposed to be the most recent.



The proposed development is considered contrary to Local Development Plan 2016 policies PMD2 criterion (L), EP1 (International Nature Conservation Sites and Protected Species), EP3 (Local Biodiversity) and EP5 (Special Landscape Areas) in that it has not been demonstrated that the development can be satisfactorily accommodated within the site without unacceptable harm to the Berwickshire Coast Special Landscape Area, internationally designated sites, and to the local environment. It has not been demonstrated that the risk of coastal erosion and land slippage can be avoided or mitigated in a manner without unacceptable detrimental impacts to these interests.

Habitat

There are 3 Phase 1 habitat types across the site;

- C3.1 Tall ruderal
- A2.1 Scrub (Dense/Continuous)
- AAJ3.2 Hedge & Trees (species-poor)

The areas of scrub are indicated with the dense hatch on the adjacent diagram, and hedges and trees are also noted.

The Environmental Assessment carried out by Ellendale confirmed that the tall ruderal scrub has been formed over ground disturbance, which has occurred from the construction of the Bay. At the time this site was under the same ownership.

The Assessment also confirmed that there were no protected species or evidence of activity of protected species within the ruderal scrub.



Habitat (cont.)

The proposals are carefully positioned on the site so as to avoid any disturbance to any valuable habitats, such as the existing trees and hedgerows, or the scrub further down the slope, which forms the edge between the Coldingham Bay settlement and the Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

Not only is the position of the proposals carefully considered, the construction disturbance of the proposals is also minimal. The majority of the build will be off-site, prefabricated and delivery to site in an 90% completed state, limiting on-site activities to the readyment of the foundations and ground works.

Apart from minimising impact to the ecological environment of the area, this was also considered the most suitable solution in terms of neighbour disturbance. It keeps site activity to the smallest programmed period possible.



section?

Buildability

no impact on slope or adjacent plots; sheet piling strategically where required from within site offset at least 1m from boundary, over clad where visible(?), careful excavation of areas to drop site so final build is not visible, formation of small scale foundations to carry pre-fab units,

Drainage of the site surface water, including the roof which is proposed to be sedum blanket, will be collected and stored for grey water use within the building and planted areas.

The run off will be collected along the retaining wall edge, so that no water run-off occurs down the slope.

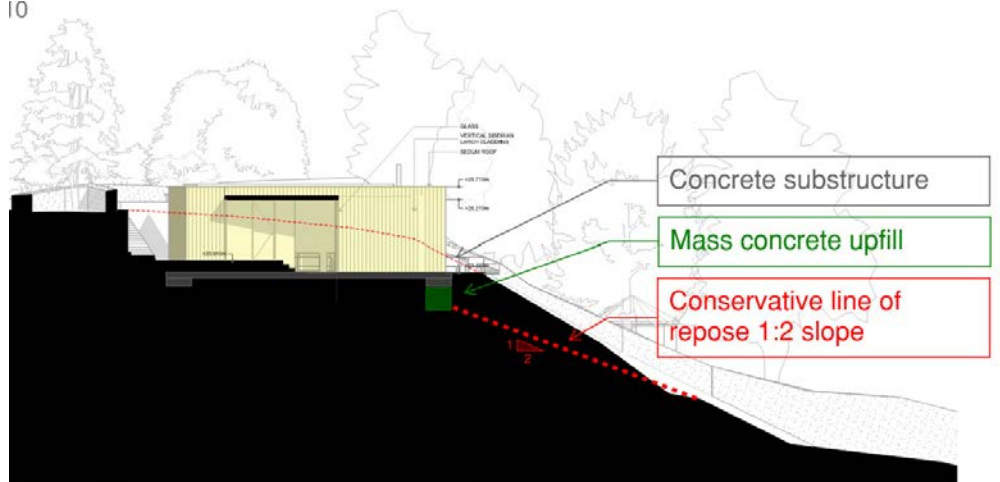
The water from the adjacent road does not run off onto the site and adjacent properties are drained within their curtilage.

Foul drainage levels have been considered and there are options to drain back into the main sewer in the road.

Once the drainage and ground works are completed the pre-fabricated units can be delivered to site and positioned on the pads. They can they be over clad and services connected.

The final finish is the decking over the terrace, which allows the protrusion of the space to the east facing the sea without the impact to the slope, keeping the natural scrub and coastal landscape intact and right up to the edge of the deck.

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