

'Grand Designs experiment' rejected by councillors

by Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter

A bid to build a three-storey-high family home on a strip of land just 4.2 metres wide was dubbed a "Grand Designs experiment" as it was rejected by councillors.

Architect Robin Sutherland came up with the modern Passivhaus build for his family after they bought property on North Berwick's High Street.

With the front of the property refurbished into a new shop front with offices for the architect upstairs, he turned his attention to designing the family home on the strip of land behind it, which measured 28.6 metres long and 4.2 metres wide.

However, despite his design being described by one councillor as "extraordinary", his vision for his new home clashed with neighbours, the community council and ward councillors, who claimed it went against the area's conservation status.

And despite planning officers ruling that the proposed house met its policies, the planning committee refused planning permission by six votes to five.

Mr Sutherland's proposed home would have had room widths of

3.5 metres.



In his design statement to planners, he said: “The site is very narrow, with a width of approximately 4.2 metres; however, an internal room width of 3.5m is achievable, which is comfortably within the bounds of normally scaled domestic space.”

But Councillor Jane Henderson, ward member, told the committee

that the width of the home would be “not much wider than a shipping container, my goodness gracious”.

She said: “I am not convinced this is the best place for a Grand Designs experiment”, adding: “Just because theoretically it can be done does not make it right.”

Neighbours overlooking the proposed house raised objections about the impact of the three-storey home on their privacy, in particular a proposed roof terrace which was included in the designs.

And they raised concerns about the use of zinc cladding on the walls and roof of the property.

Mr Sutherland pointed to other properties in North Berwick which had zinc cladding included in their design.

However, Councillor Jim Goodfellow, ward member, said that the proposed new house was a “zinc house”.

North Berwick Community Council also lodged objections on grounds of the impact of the zinc materials on the conservation area and on neighbours’ privacy and amenity.

Planning convenor Councillor Norman Hampshire backed the proposals, pointing out that planning officers had ruled the design met each of the council’s planning policies involved.

He said the house was something which would, in time, be viewed as an “attractive addition” to the town’s conservation area.

However, Councillor Willie Innes, council leader, pointed to the strength of concerns from the community and said that while he appreciated the “extraordinary way” the architect had created the design for the house on the site, it was the wrong location .

He said: “I accept what local members are saying. I think the

overall impact would be too significant.”

The committee voted by six members to five to refuse planning permission.

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