

**North Park, Rheda – Phase 2**

## **Design Rationale**

**for KCS Agriculture Ltd**

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site evolution limited

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## Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Introduction and scheme history .....	1
1.2	Purpose of this report .....	2
1.3	Key objectives from the original design rationale .....	3
1.4	Phase 2 Scheme development .....	3
1.5	Supporting documents.....	3
2	Review of Design objectives.....	5
2.1	Introduction.....	5
2.2	Housing need .....	5
2.3	Historic landscapes .....	5
2.4	Landscape Character .....	6
2.5	Landform.....	6
2.6	Community .....	7
2.7	Connectivity .....	7
2.8	Visual amenity for existing residents .....	7
2.9	Amenity and open space within the site.....	8
2.10	Biodiversity.....	8
2.11	Sustainable drainage .....	8
3	Summary .....	9

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction and scheme history

In January 2019, Outline planning approval was granted for housing in North Park, Rheda, an area lying between Rheda Park to the west and Rheda Close to the east, which itself is on the western edge of Frizington (planning reference 4/18/2426/001). That application included an indicative layout which was strongly informed by landscape, visual and placemaking objectives. In addition to the Design and Access Statement for the Outline approval, a Design Rationale report was produced in order to explain how the indicative layout took landscape, visual and placemaking issues into account in its development, as measured against a series of overarching, and themed design objectives.

Following Outline approval, Reserved Matters approval was granted for the southern part of the site (Phase 1 – planning reference 4/19/2261/0R1). That application and approval included more detailed development proposals than those presented at Outline stage, and the scheme was modified (as would normally be the case in design development) to take account of buildability, technical issues and market forces.

The development of Phase 1 has left the northern part of the site undeveloped but with Outline approval for housing development. There remains a reasonable expectation that housing will be developed on that land, and that proposals to do so should be in harmony with original design objectives.

The following image illustrates the proposed Phase 2 development (*ref. Eden Environment dwg 14 rev 07*).

Following the application for Phase 1, and consultation with the planning authority, the proposals have been amended, and this Design Rationale report has been updated accordingly.



**Figure 1 The revised proposed Phase 2 development proposal upon which this review is based.**

In this review four important factors must be taken into account:

- There is an extant Outline planning approval for housing on Phase 2.
- By the nature of scheme development, the detail of Phase 1 is not identical to that shown in the same area of the indicative layout. This means that some of the original objectives may no longer fully apply, or they may need to be viewed differently in light of the new “baseline conditions”.
- The original design objectives applied to the whole of the site, and not just the one part of it now being considered here (Phase 2). Proposals for Phase 2 must therefore be considered in that context.
- Phase 2 proposals have now been developed to a much greater level of detail than that shown on the indicative layout at Outline application stage, and there is now certainty that specific objectives can be met (for example by the planting of specific tree species in particular places, or the use of estate railings on certain frontages).

## **1.2 Purpose of this report**

The purpose of this brief report is to review how each of the original, themed design objectives are addressed by Phase 2 design proposals, taking into account the way in which Phase 1 has evolved from the indicative layout.

### **1.3      *Key objectives from the original design rationale***

The original Design Rationale report which accompanied the Outline application had a series of overarching design objectives (see start of section 2 in that document). These overarching objectives are listed below. They were followed by a series of more detailed and themed objectives, and these are listed and commented on here in the following Chapter 2.

The overarching key objectives of the analysis (in the original Design Rationale report) (were) to help support a design which (verbatim from the original):

- *Would provide for the type of housing needed in the borough.*
- *Would provide different types of houses (for example bungalows, large detached houses, companionable clusters with shared spaces, smaller houses with large gardens, larger houses with small gardens, and everything in between)*
- *Respects and builds on the historic character of the site and its surroundings.*
- *Helps to marry together the different types of housing to the east and west (one is quite “exclusive” while the other is conventional, modern fairly high-density housing).*
- *Helps to build a bridge between those different types of communities.*
- *Pays attention to the visual amenity of existing residents.*

### **1.4      *Phase 2 Scheme development***

The design proposals for Phase 2 were developed in the round by a team of developers, architects and landscape architects. The process included every team member producing their own sketch ideas, to present to each-other, round-the-table co-design meetings, and presentation to advisors including estate agents, the client, and other experts. During this process multiple options were produced and tested. When the team was satisfied with the underlying layout and general site characterisation, attention moved to selection and appearance of house types, choice of materials, planting styles and the minutiae of boundary treatments in different parts of the site.

Following consultation during the application process, the same design team worked together again to refine the proposals to address comments provided by the planning authority in relation to issues such as Character Areas and visual amenity for local residents.

### **1.5      *Supporting documents***

Please read this report alongside these documents produced by Eden Environment:

- Rheda Phase 2 Document 14 Proposed Layout
- Rheda Phase 2 Document 15 Landscape Plan
- Rheda Phase 2 Document 16 Planting Plan
- Rheda Phase 2 Document 17 Plant Schedule and Specification

Please note that information on document 19 (shrub planting detail) has now been incorporated into document 16 (Planting Plan) so is no longer part of the submission.

Architectural drawings and the Design and Access Statement Response produced by other members of the design development team should also be referred to for additional detail and illustration.

## 2 Review of Design objectives

### 2.1 *Introduction*

The following sections review how each of the original design objectives relates to, and could be met by, the proposed Phase 2 development. The original themed objective is highlighted in *italics*, and following this is a commentary.

### 2.2 *Housing need*

.....the key design objectives are to:

- *Create a “quality” setting for a range of different types of homes and different arrangements of houses.*
- *Avoid having an unduly high-density development.*
- *Create a development which has a “uniqueness” about it.*

The Phase 2 development creates a very high quality setting for homes, through the use of rich characterful planting and a variety of different, traditional boundary treatments to build a sense of place across the whole site and within it. There are several different types of homes within Phase 2 that complement the range of housetypes approved in Phase 1 and those already located within Rheda Park. In terms of different arrangements, there are three very distinctive character areas in Phase 2: The Green, The Copse and The Courtyard. Given that Phase 1 already has several different character areas, and Phase 2 is a relatively small area, any further subdivision into different areas was considered to be counter-productive, and would weaken, not strengthen a sense of place. The attention to detail (and the ability to commit to that detail) enables the designers to be certain that they have created a unique development. In terms of density, Phase 2 is favourably low compared to both typical new housing development and even the relatively low density of Phase 1.

### 2.3 *Historic landscapes*

.....the key design objectives are to:

- *Where possible, preserve the historic features, although some parkland trees are already very old.*
- *Keep as many historic features as possible, and restore and manage them.*
- *Refer to the site’s historic character through the use of appropriate new but traditional features.*

Within the boundary of Phase 2, those historic features which remain are to be preserved; namely, a couple of existing mature trees towards the north west and a block of woodland along the eastern boundary. These are incorporated into the Phase 2 design proposal. Reference is made to the site’s historic character through use of appropriate new yet traditional features (building materials, boundary treatments etc.) and the layout of the dwellings, for example to create the appearance of a courtyard typically found in estates or prosperous farm holdings.



## 2.4 *Landscape Character*

.....the key design objectives are to:

- *Retain the shape of the hill. New building will always disrupt and hide the underlying shape of the land to some extent, but paying attention to siting, orientation and density of housing can help to preserve the “lie of the land”.*
- *Retain and enhance parkland character as far as possible within the context of a new housing development.*
- *Retain and increase the number of hedges and hedgerow trees, in places where parkland style planting is not feasible or appropriate.*
- *Strengthen or add to the woodland blocks found here.*

The outline indicative layout sought to keep the crest of the hill undeveloped and to reinforce its prominence with tree planting. This principle remains in the detailed design of Phase 2, with the crest kept open and planted with a stately specimen, flanked by other trees. Within the site, the parkland character is retained and enhanced by incorporating existing parkland trees into the design, planting more of the same, and using details such as estate railings. Outside the site the landowner is planting more parkland trees in open grassland to the north and this reinforces the parkland character in the wider area. Where parkland planting is not feasible or appropriate, hedgerows and hedgerow trees have been widely incorporated into the design of Phase 2. Hedgerows are included to frontages and between plots, especially along the western and northern boundaries where they provide screening and privacy. Woodland blocks have been strengthened (with tree planting and with woodland shrub planting) along the eastern boundary of the site; as well as strengthening the landscape character, these reduce visual impact for existing residents. There is also a small new woodland block – The Copse - to the west of the Phase 2 layout. Ultimately, the canopy of this planting will join that of Rheda Park, extending and reinforcing the wooded character and wildlife corridors.

These measures also support retention and enhancement of the key Characteristics found within Cumbria County Council’s Landscape Character Guidance and Toolkit (for Character Type 5a Ridge and Valley), especially in relation to vegetation patterns (hedges bounding pasture, native woodland, tree clumps and plantations).

## 2.5 *Landform*

*In its own right, it is desirable to retain the natural shape of the land, because it helps to shape development, reduce inter-visibility and provide distinctiveness. In addition to retaining the shape of hills, tree planting on high points can emphasise the shape of the land, and keeping roofs and ridgelines away from high points can help prevent a landform from being masked.*

The way in which tree planting on high points has been used in the Phase 2 layout is discussed above. Roofs and ridgelines have been kept away from high points and in addition, single storey bungalows, and lower-height dwellings have been specified in certain places to help avoid masking the shape of the land.

## **2.6 Community**

*The objective is to provide a bridge between the two communities by providing a gradation between the two. Connectivity is also important and that is discussed below.*

Phase 2 provides a gradation between the individual dwellings found within Rheda Park and the higher density housing found in Rheda Close, and now also the development of Phase 1. It is appropriate that more exclusive and less dense new housing is provided for in Phase 2 because, being lower density and abundantly planted also creates gradation between residential areas and countryside.

## **2.7 Connectivity**

*The objective is to provide connectivity between the proposed housing and other communities, and within the site itself.*

The level of physical connectivity between Rheda Park and Rheda Close which the whole (Phase 1 and 2) scheme could assist with is largely provided for in Phase 1 – because that is where the opportunity lay. A footpath connection is provided to Phase 1 along the main access road and, within Phase 2 itself, connectivity is supported by shared surface roads that enable people to wander freely on foot.

## **2.8 Visual amenity for existing residents**

*The objective is to minimise change of view for existing residents and to make any change in view as pleasant as possible, and with as little “overlooking” of existing and proposed properties as possible.*

Because there is Outline permission for housing on the Phase 2 site, it is reasonable to conclude that houses and gardens will be part of the future scene and views in that area. Nevertheless, the design of Phase 2 seeks to reduce visual impact for existing residents, following the same design principles of the indicative layout design:

- Having single storey or lower dwellings near to existing properties.
- Using greenery to soften, filter and screen views between existing and proposed dwellings. A combination of both dense hedgerows and trees are proposed because together these screen views at ground and garden level and views at upper window level. Along the western boundary of the site a substantial semi-mature laurel hedge is proposed. This “instant hedge” would provide an immediate dense, evergreen boundary, growing in effectiveness as it increases further in height. This species was also chosen because it is characteristic of both parkland landscapes and of the character found within Rheda Park.
- Orienting new buildings to reduce overlooking between existing and proposed properties.
- Providing larger gardens to plots adjacent to existing properties.

Visual effects for people in surrounding properties have been considered, especially for people in existing occupied properties, while future occupiers of properties in Phase 1 benefit from greater privacy and offset distances than required by policy.

## **2.9      *Amenity and open space within the site***

*The objective is to provide a network of usable, pleasant open spaces within the site which can be used by people of all ages, and which are overlooked by people's homes for passive surveillance, to make the spaces feel safe and comfortable.*

This objective has been met through the design process which led to the development of three different character areas and corresponding open spaces within Phase 2. So, The Green has, appropriately, a green, The Copse has an area of light woodland, while The Courtyard has a traditional open courtyard at its centre. In every case, these spaces are highly overlooked by dwellings to make the spaces feel safe. In addition to these main three spaces there are small incidental spaces, some with seats, to enrich the open space capital.

## **2.10     *Biodiversity***

*... the key objectives are to support and enhance biodiversity within and beyond the site.*

Compared to the existing site: grazed grass and some mature trees, Phase 2 will significantly increase biodiversity, opportunities for fauna, wildlife corridors and species diversity because of the large numbers and diverse mix of native and semi-native trees, hedgerows and shrubs which have been proposed.

## **2.11     *Sustainable drainage***

*The drainage studies have been taken into account and the key objective is to provide sustainable drainage for the development, following principles of Ciria's Water Sensitive Urban Drainage (WSUD). A brief description of the principles of WSUD is provided below. In a nutshell, WSUD seeks to manage water, and make it into an opportunity, not a threat.*

Phase 2 will incorporate appropriately designed and engineered underground attenuation and treatment as an extension to the existing SuDS drainage system also serving Phase 1.

## Summary

The following section asks, point by point, whether the Phase 2 has satisfied the original overarching objectives which were set out when the original indicative layout was developed.

It acknowledges that the development of Phase 1 has resulted in an evolution from the original concept, that proposals in Phase 2 must integrate with solutions previously approved for Phase 1, and that there is now a detailed design to clarify how individual objectives are proposed to be met within Phase 2. Questions relating to key objectives are asked in *italics* followed by a commentary in standard font.

- *Would the proposed Phase 2 development provide the type of housing needed in the borough?*

Yes.

- *Have different types of houses (for example bungalows, large detached houses, companionable clusters with shared spaces, smaller houses with large gardens, larger houses with small gardens, and everything in between) been provided?*

Yes. It is appropriate to balance the aspiration for different types of houses against the concern that too many different types in a small space would lead to an incoherent design, and a watering-down of sense of place.

- *Does the Phase 2 design respect and build on the historic character of the site and its surroundings?*

Yes, through the use of layout design and the use of parkland details (both hard and soft landscape).

- *Does the Phase 2 design help to marry together the different types of housing to the east and west (one is quite “exclusive” while the other is conventional, modern fairly high-density housing)?*

Yes, and it also marries together with the Phase 1 development, while still appearing distinctive and aspirational, compared to it.

- *Does the Phase 2 design help to build a bridge between those different types of communities?*

Yes, via physical links within Phase 1 and via visual links to the wider area.

- *Does the Phase 2 design pay attention to the visual amenity of existing residents?*

Yes.

In the development of the indicative layout for Land at North Park, Rheda (encompassing Phases 1 and 2), the intention was to create an integrated design which married Rheda Park to Rheda Close, and which softened out along its northern edge to open parkland. The rather abrupt boundary and provision of infrastructure along the northern edge of Phase 1 contemplates further development within Phase 2. These proposals for Phase 2 offer a comprehensive and well considered resolution for the balance of this approved housing site that avoids a repeat of past mistakes along the northern edge

of Rheda Close, where there is a straight edge of houses all in the same orientation with little vegetation to soften its appearance.

Phase 2, with its lower density, high level of planting (and adjacent parkland planting, old and new), open spaces and attention to character-detail helps to finish off the whole site in a satisfactory, pleasing and appropriate way. It builds a strong sense of place with three different character areas, and marries into the surrounding residential and countryside setting.