

4.0 ALTERNATIVES & DESIGN EVOLUTION

Introduction

- 4.1 Regulation 18 and Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations require an applicant to provide:

"a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment".

- 4.2 This chapter of the ES identifies the main alternatives to the Development which have been considered by the Applicant and describes the main reasons for the choices made.

Alternatives

- 4.3 Alternative options typically comprise:

- The 'Do Nothing' alternative, where the Development is not progressed;
- Consideration of Alternative Locations or Uses; and
- Consideration of Alternative Designs.

The 'Do Nothing' Alternative and Alternative Locations or Uses

- 4.4 The 'Do Nothing' alternative considers the future conditions at the Site, should the Development not progress. As outlined in Chapter 1 of the ES, the Site forms part of the wider mixed-use allocation (Policy JP Allocation 2: Stakehill) within the revised Greater Manchester Draft Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document (DPD)ⁱ.
- 4.5 The Development has the capacity to provide approximately 82% of homes allocated to the Site in the Greater Manchester Places for Everyone DPD.
- 4.6 Moreover, the RBC Core Strategyⁱⁱ also recognises the Site of Stakehill Business Park (Policy E3) as an area for economic growth as well as encouraging new housing in this area (Policy C2).
- 4.7 The Design Evolution section below sets out the environmental considerations and how design principles have been achieved. Further information on the principles of design is available from ES Chapter 3: Site and Development Description, and the Design and Access

Statement (DAS) submitted in support of the planning application.

- 4.8 As the Site is included as a draft allocation for residential and mixed-use development, assuming the Development were not to proceed, the Site could be progressed by another entity for development. The Applicant is in a position to deliver the Development and so the do-nothing option was not considered.
- 4.9 Alternative sites were not considered as the Applicant can deliver the Development at the Site. Furthermore, through the recognition in the Greater Manchester DPD, this indicates that the Site has been specified for mixed-use, residential-led development by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (which includes RBC) due to its strategic position and limited site constraints. Consequently, there has not been a necessity to consider alternative sites as the Site is included as a draft allocation for mixed-use, residential-led development.

Consideration of Alternative Designs

- 4.10 As discussed in Statement of Community Involvement ('SCI') accompanying the planning application, the design of the Development has evolved from engagement with the local community and stakeholders, and in response to the constraints and opportunities within and local to the Site.

Consultation

- 4.11 As set out in Chapter 2 of this ES the Applicants undertook a consultation exercise as part of the planning application. The concerns raised through the consultation process are set out in Table 4.1. The comments have been grouped into common themes and include the Applicants' feedback. Further information on the consultation process is provided in the SCI accompanying the planning application.

Table 4.1: Design Response to Consultation Feedback

Consultation Feedback	Design Response
Loss of Green Belt	- Green infrastructure will be provided across the Development comprising a range of ecological habitats such as native broadleaved woodland blocks; native species rich hedgerows; native tree planting; species rich wildflower grassland; ponds/ areas of open water, marginal wetlands, reed beds, street trees; native and ornamental garden planting; and garden trees. - As shown in Figure 3.1, the southern portion of the Development will be a community parkland, which will include a retained pond, walking and cycling routes and retained trees. - The Development will also contain other areas of open space, such as within the south west of the Development which will also comprise space for an orchard. - The northern and eastern boundaries of the Development will comprise of green

Consultation Feedback	Design Response
	infrastructure which is likely to be woodland planting. The area within the north east of the Development which is at a higher gradient than the remainder of the Development will also become a parkland, which will include views.
Highways Concerns	- The Development is designed to be conducive to walking and cycling. - Improvements to the pedestrian environment compared with the baseline include the provision of footways and cycleways at the proposed access junction and high-quality public realm within the Development. The additional infrastructure will improve pedestrian connectivity. - The proposed secondary access at A664 Manchester Road / Thornham New Road junction will provide upgraded footways and cycleways along the upgraded section of Thornham New Road linking the Site with the wider area. - All proposed Site access junctions and other supporting works are designed to the relevant guidelines and will be subject to safety audits.
Impact on Local Services and Amenities	- As outlined in Chapter 3, land is being provided to accommodate mixed-use development, which could comprise residential land uses as well as commercial or a local centre; and - As outlined in Chapter 3 land has been reserved to accommodate an extension to St John's Primary School.

4.12 The design of the Development has been informed by the following key design principles, which align with Policy JP Allocation 2: Stakehill of the GM DPD:

- A landscape first approach which provides a new community park to the south of Thornham Lane with ecological enhancements and active travel routes, integrating existing ponds, and enhanced landscape buffers along the northern and eastern boundaries of the Site;
- A green buffer is provided around St John's Church;
- A network of public open spaces integrate areas of steep topography, existing landscape features and public footpaths;
- The varied neighbourhood provides up to 1,380 new homes, a local centre, land for a potential primary school extension and maintains the setting and key views of St John's church;
- A connected neighbourhood in which primary access is granted via the A664 Rochdale Road, and secondary access to 100 homes via Thornham New Road and Chatburn Avenue; and
- A network of active travel routes will be created following public footpaths, local lanes and new off-road footpaths.

4.13 Further detail on the key design principles is provided in the DAS submitted with the planning application.

4.14 As set in the DAS which accompanies the planning application, the design for the Development has been refined to respond to a contextual analysis and a design review.

Design Evolution

- 4.15 A number of changes have occurred over the course of the design evolution in relation to key environmental constraints and opportunities on and surrounding the Site. The information pertinent to the choices made, taking into account environmental effects, is provided below. The DAS provides more detail on the evolution of the Development, which is not required for the ES.
- 4.16 The following design changes were made, in order to improve the environmental effects of the Development:

Detailed Element:

- In the western portion of the Development, three new SuDS attenuation ponds adjacent to Thornham Cricket club will be created alongside the existing linear pond, providing increased flood attenuation and biodiversity benefits;
- The existing pond south of Carnforth Avenue will be retained and a new pond will be created adjacent to it, providing biodiversity enhancements;
- Meadow grass mix will be planted alongside new trees and a proposed wildlife pond and existing trees surrounding St John's Church towards the south west of the Development will be retained, reducing the adverse effect on the setting of the Grade II listed building;
- A Public Right of Way (PRoW) running through the western central portion of the Site will be retained as part of the Phase 1 detailed element of the Development, creating a recreational path for the new residents and encouraging active travel, which will have a beneficial effect on residents' health;
- The detailed element of the Development will comprise 15% affordable housing for new residents, as well as a range of housing tenures from 1–5 bedroom homes, which will have a beneficial effect on local housing supply;
- The local centre could provide affordable homes as well as a commercial use for new residents, therefore having a beneficial effect on access to local infrastructure;
- Proposed native tree and shrub planting in the western portion of the Site adjacent to Carnforth Avenue will mitigate the effect of a changed landscape for existing residential receptors;
- The 3m shared footpath and cycleway will encourage a modal shift to more sustainable forms of travel, therefore having beneficial effects in terms of transport, air quality and noise; and
- New planting of a variety of trees, hedgerows, plants and grassland, alongside new

wildlife ponds will sequester carbon from the atmosphere, therefore improving climatic effects.

Outline Element:

- The community parkland in the south of the Development will provide ecological enhancements as well as recreational space, therefore having beneficial health effects for new residents and visitors to the area;
- Land to the north of St John's primary school includes open space which will enhance biodiversity on the Site and provide an area for recreation for pupils, therefore having beneficial health effects;
- The school extension land, as shown in Figure 3.1, provides space for a school extension to increase pupil capacity should it be necessary, improving primary school capacity in the local area;
- The north and east of the Development will comprise an area of green infrastructure (refer to Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3) and this will mitigate effects on the Development in terms of noise and air quality from the adjacent motorways;
- As shown in Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3, the maximum height of the Development will be up to 3 storeys and 12.5m (to ridge level), in keeping with the local area, which will mitigate adverse effects on landscape and views;
- There will be several pedestrian access points to the Development, as shown in Figure 3.1, including from Chatburn Avenue and Carnforth Avenue to the west, along Thornham Lane in the south and from the M62 to the north. This will integrate the Development to the existing built form and encourage a walkable neighbourhood, and therefore have beneficial health effects;
- A secondary access point, to provide access to approximately 100 homes within the north of the Development, will alleviate significant adverse transport effects on the primary access point; and
- Ponds and trees will be retained throughout the outline element of the Development which will be beneficial in terms of biodiversity.

REFERENCES

ⁱ Greater Manchester Places for Everyone Submission Plan, published August 2021. Link: <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/4838/places-for-everyone.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Rochdale Borough Council Core Strategy. Link: <https://www.rochdale.gov.uk/downloads/file/405/core-strategy>