

4 ALTERNATIVES & DESIGN EVOLUTION

Introduction

4.1 Regulation 18 and Schedule 4(2) of the EIA Regulations require an applicant to provide “a description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of development design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects”. This chapter, therefore, reviews the reasonable alternative options studied by the Applicant, including in relation to principal land use and siting, and the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, being the current design for the Development which forms the subject of assessment within the ES. Typical alternative options considered comprise:

- The ‘do nothing’ alternative where the Development is not progressed;
- Alternative Locations and uses; and
- Alternative Design/layout for the Development.

4.2 The form of the Development has been influenced by a range of factors, including location, surrounding uses and townscape character, environmental impact assessment and input from RBKuT, statutory consultees and stakeholders through extensive meetings, workshops and public exhibitions.

The Alternative Options

The ‘do nothing’ Alternative

4.3 The Site is a council estate containing 832 homes that was built in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Much of the existing built form on the Estate is in a bad state of repair and there are fundamental design flaws that exist across the Site. It is considered that the physical layout of the Estate is poor with main routes that are badly lit and not overlooked. Many of the existing roads end in cul-de-sacs, impeding safety and connectivity within the Estate and with the surrounding area.

4.4 Under the ‘do nothing’ scenario, the Development would not be progressed. In this situation, the existing configuration of the Site would not make the most efficient use of the land for delivery of higher quality housing and other uses. In addition, the beneficial and adverse effects outlined in this ES relating to the Development would not occur. The ‘do nothing’

option has therefore not been considered.

Consideration of Alternative Locations and Uses

- 4.5 The regeneration of the Site is explicitly referred to in the Kingston Council Core Strategyⁱ. Policy KT1 Kingston Town Neighbourhood of the Core Strategy states that '*outside of Kingston Town Centre, the Council will focus housing delivery in the Norbiton area and promote the regeneration of the Cambridge Road Estate*'. Kingston is also identified as an Opportunity Area within the Intend to Publish London Plan (2019)ⁱⁱ, with the Cambridge Road Estate identified as an area where there is significant scope for change.
- 4.6 Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy states '*the Council will take full advantage of opportunities to deliver new housing and will seek to ensure that a broad mix of accommodation options are available to residents and that a range of local housing needs are met*.' Policy CS10 also states '*the Council will seek to meet and exceed the Borough's annual housing target*' and in particular, maximise the delivery of affordable housing. New housing should be delivered in the most sustainable locations, and with the associated infrastructure necessary to support it. Based on the above, it is clear from regional and local policy, that there is a need for new housing within RBKuT with Cambridge Road recognised as an area for development.
- 4.7 As the Applicant's objective is to redevelop the Site, no other locations were considered for the Development.
- 4.8 RBKuT initially started a Housing Regeneration programme for the Estate in August 2015, setting up a residents' Steering Group and undertaking considerable community engagement to explore the feasibility and viability of different redevelopment options on the Site. From August 2016, potential redevelopment options were subsequently tested, ranging from keeping some of the existing homes on the Site and building some homes through to redeveloping all homes. Three options were subsequently shortlisted and residents were consulted through a range of drop in sessions and a full survey of all residents on the Site was undertaken. The preferred option identified by residents was for a full, phased, demolition and redevelopment of the Estate.
- 4.9 RBKuT then worked with residents in Spring 2017 on the Strategic Development Brief to shape the vision and objectives for the regeneration of the Site, which included:
- Putting the community at the heart of the regeneration;
 - Provide a new model of family living;

- Deliver a public realm led, high quality living environment;
- Promote sustainable forms of travel and healthy living; and
- Transform the neighbourhood with high quality architecture and urban design.

4.10 The Applicant was subsequently selected in October 2018 to be a Joint Venture (JV) partner with RBKuT and since then, has undertaken comprehensive engagement and consultation with residents and the wider community on the regeneration of the Site. From 24th February 2020 to 18th March 2020, residents were balloted to determine whether they wanted the redevelopment of the Site to proceed or not. A copy of the Ballot Form is included as Appendix 2.8 of the ES. From the 820 eligible voters, a turnout of 86% was achieved, with 73% voting in favour and supporting the proposals to regenerate the Estate. The 'Yes' vote was underpinned by a number of commitments from the Applicant including the provision of new and energy efficient homes, and a safer, more attractive Estate with new public spaces and play areas.

4.11 Engagement with the local community has been fundamental to the proposed regeneration of the Site. Each stage of consultation has involved a range of consultation methods and has always included a public exhibition where the latest design proposals were presented and feedback on the design proposals was welcomed. Following the residents' ballot, further consultation has been undertaken prior to submission of the Planning Application. A summary of the consultation process undertaken can be found in Chapter 2: EIA Methodology. A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has also been submitted separately in support of the planning application.

4.12 Taking into consideration the existing use of the Site, it is clear that the principle of residential mixed-use development at the Site is acceptable and suitable. In addition, consultation with statutory and non-statutory consultees, including local residents and members of the wider community, has allowed the Development to evolve to suit their needs and ensure that the objectives of the scheme can be achieved. In light of the above, during the design evolution of the Development no other types of land uses were considered. The Development of a residential led, mixed use scheme in an existing residential area is considered an appropriate use of land, compatible with surrounding land uses. The proposed non-residential uses are also considered to enhance the existing provision on the Site and add to the creation of a sustainable, mixed and vibrant Development.

Consideration of Alternative Design/Layout for the Development

4.13 The Development submitted for approval is the result of a thorough analysis of environmental

constraints and opportunities, access issues and market demand. Consultation with stakeholder and resident groups, as well as an urban design focused professional review from RBKuT, the GLA and a Design Review Panel (DRP) has been a key influence in design evolution. There have not been discrete alternative designs or layouts for comparison of environmental effects but a fluid, iterative design process taking account of environmental constraints, opportunities, and interim assessment. The design and assessment process has been iterative, with changes gradually proposed to reduce adverse effects and maximise beneficial ones.

4.14 The physical constraints and opportunities of the Site have been critical in developing the parameter plans and detailed design for Phase 1. The illustrative masterplan (Figure 3.1) has been developed further as one example of how the Site could be developed. The Applicant is committed to improving the quality of homes for existing residents on the Site and providing additional new high-quality homes for social rent, shared ownership and private sale.

4.15 To achieve the objectives stated above, the key design objectives of the Development are to:

- Significantly improve the quality of housing and environment for current residents;
- Address the specific housing needs of current residents and an appropriate variety of new homes;
- Deliver additional affordable and market homes to help address local and strategic housing needs;
- Deliver a step change in the quality and accessibility of the public realm (public spaces, parks and play spaces) available to residents and the wider community to access and enjoy;
- Reconnect the Site with the wider community;
- Provide a new community centre alongside new commercial/retail facilities and office floorspace;
- Create short-term and long-term employment opportunities;
- Promote sustainable forms of transport alongside appropriate car parking provision;
- Connect to and help to mobilise the Kingston District Heating Network; and
- Transform the neighbourhood into a high-quality place that everyone is proud of.

Design Evolution

4.16 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. This evolution is summarised below with a qualitative comparison of the environmental effects.

- 4.17 The design of the Development has evolved with the modulation of building heights to be taller at the centre and the north of the Development, with shorter blocks at the edges. This has reduced the perceived overall bulk of the Development and any sense of physical over-dominance. Consequently, the Development steps upwards into a new, more urban setting as it progresses inwards and north. Townscape and visual effects are therefore more positive than could have been the case with less attention given to how the bulk would be perceived.
- 4.18 Daylight and sunlight have been important considerations in the design evolution of the Development. Design steps were taken to open up gaps between building plots in the centre of the Development to give views up from the streets to open sky and also to position buildings within the Site away from boundaries with surrounding residential properties. This would ensure the gaps between plots and streets are as wide as possible, allow sunlight to pass down to street level between building plots, improve daylight and sunlight availability and reduce adverse effects than would otherwise have been the case. Steps have also been taken to concentrate building height away from the edges and staggering building heights to allow for additional daylight availability. The design of buildings in the detailed Phase 1 of the Development became separated, creating a collection of individual blocks coming to ground instead of a single, consistent podium base. This carried through into the evolving building typologies and material palette for Phase 1.
- 4.19 Wind microclimate conditions have also been an important consideration in the design evolution of the Development. Tall buildings have the potential to lead to adverse microclimatic conditions within amenity spaces including public realm. Iterative design development workshops and wind analysis led to the repositioning of balconies on buildings where possible for the detailed Phase 1 element of the Development. Other mitigation measures to improve effects associated with Wind included in the design for the detailed Phase 1 element, included fixed architectural screening to terraces and balconies, as well as softer natural solutions with tall evergreen shrubs and trees. The iterative assessment and design of the massing has led to the Development creating less adverse wind effects than without screening and landscaping.
- 4.20 Green space throughout the Development has been increased and enhanced as the design of the Development has evolved. Initial designs included the creation of a single, large green space running across the centre of the Site. The further iterations of the design, the proposed green space has been redistributed across the Site to provide a varied mix of different neighbourhood spaces, including a community growing space, a 160m long rain garden, mounded and flat lawns, interconnected landscape areas and biodiverse nature areas, included as part of the outline elements of the Development. These provide key ecological

enhancements to the Site and more beneficial effects than would have occurred without careful consideration of how to increase the value of the Site for biodiversity.

- 4.21 Continuous iterations of road and plot positions, creating an entirely different design of buildings, routes and open spaces to the existing layout of the Site have also allowed improved retention of existing mature tree planting, with no loss of Category A trees, and over 70% overall retention of trees in the design of the Development. The parking areas have also been softened, such as to the west of Plot B of the detailed Phase 1 element of the Development, the with additional tree planting and a new residents' garden around the existing trees. Beneficial effects on landscape, health and biodiversity are therefore considered to be greater than would have been the case without care taken to retain and enhance planting within the Development.
- 4.22 A further key design development has been to integrate the MUGA with the built form and landscaping around Plot C of the detailed Phase 1 element of the Development. This has created strong links to the Community Centre and the active spaces of Madingley Green with publicly accessible climbing features on the walls of the building providing a unique fitness attractor. The design of the community centre in Plot C has also evolved to allow for internal sporting activities for local youth and community groups. These enhancements will all be improving human health for the local residents and the wider community and increasing beneficial effects than may otherwise have been the case.

REFERENCES

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- ⁱ Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, Core Strategy, 2012
 - ⁱⁱ London Plan Intend to Publish (December 2019)