Land to the east of Holt Road, Horsford.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY - REVISION G

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INTRODUCTION

Liz Lake Associates has been appointed by David Wilson Homes (Eastern) to provide landscape design services for a proposed residential development in Horsford. The site is a continuation of the work carried out at the Butterfly Mill development, also by David Wilson Homes (Eastern).

The landscape design brief requires the residential properties to be integrated into the surrounding context. The brief for the landscape design has been refined in collaboration with the client and design team.

Context
Located in the county of Norfolk, the 27.8 acre site (area within the application boundary) is located in the northern part of the Village of Horsford.

The nearest city is Norwich, approximately 9km south; Norwich International Airport is 5km to the southeast of the Site; The Royal Norwich Golf Club 7km to the south; Wroxham Broad is 10km to the east and the former Site of Horsford Castle, a Norman castle, 2km to the south. Although these locations are important features of the Site context, they are not directly affiliated to the Application Site. The Site is outside of the airport’s flight path and has no water bodies that are within the Site or in the Site’s immediate vicinity.

The Site encompasses agricultural fields located on land east of Holt Road as well as a section of Green Lane. The Site is connected by road to Green Lane to the north of the Site.
INTRODUCTION

Landscape Character
Broadland District Council’s Landscape Character Assessment map, Figure 3.5 by Chris Blandford Associates designates the Site’s character as ‘Horford Woodland Heath Mosaic’ with the East of England Landscape Framework classifying the area under ‘Forested Estate Sandlands’. From this it can be deduced that the forested areas around the Site are of great importance to the location.

The closest area of forest is to the north of the Site named Horsford Forest; a County Wildlife Site (CWS) designated forest. This forest is a conifer forest with significant areas of dry and wet heathland and is adjacent to the Site on the opposite side of Green Lane.

The Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan (July 2009) notes the forest’s importance to Norwich, stating that it ‘has an influence ... highlighting its importance from the city scale upwards as a recreational resource’. The forest also has biodiversity value by supplying habitat for two rare insect species, the Bog Bush Cricket and the Silver-Studded Blue Butterfly, also containing a variety of other flora and fauna.

The Landscape Character Assessment for the area notes the importance of boundaries in relation to settlements. To retain the qualities of the character area designers should: ‘Seek to ensure that potential new developments comprise a fully integrated landscape and urban design strategy, which is consistent with the local landscape character and screen existing and potential harsh settlement edges’. Currently the vegetated boundaries are an important feature of the Application Site and as such will be encouraged to thrive and are to be enhanced.

Views and Topography
The topography of the surrounding area is relatively flat with no significant changes in ground levels, combined with mature field boundary vegetation the views into the Site are limited. As such only short range views from the Site’s immediate boundary will afford views of the proposed dwellings.

Views out of the site are limited as the topography of the site is largely flat with a gentle gradient lowering from north to south. This currently allows views towards Phase 1 of the development.
**INTRODUCTION**

**The Site**
The Site is currently part of an open arable field with vegetated field hedgerows in the north (identified as H156, H157 and H171 on report P230311-PD-21) that compartmentalise smaller fields. These hedgerows consist of *Ilex aquifolium* and *Crataegus sp* and are considered to be of good quality (Category B) by Tim Moya Associates Arboriculturalists and contain a number of trees (also Category B). Trees T152, T153, T154, T155, T160 in these hedges are to be retained and hedges are to be felled. For more details refer to Tim Moya Associates 'Arboricultural Report - Assessment of trees in relation to development for planning purposes' P230311-PD-21.

Although there are a number of trees surveyed, many of the trees fall outside of the Site boundary and therefore are contextual features that are pertinent to the feel of the site and will not be altered or damaged owing to development. Tree cover, whilst relatively low owing to the sites primary use as an agricultural field enhances screening and shortens views.

**Boundaries**
The boundaries to the Site are largely vegetated. The westernmost boundary consists primarily of the rear gardens to the existing properties on Holt Road, Olive Crescent and The Shrublands. There are a scattering of trees within rear gardens and most properties have timber fences that adjoin the Application Site. Also located on the eastern side of the Site is an engineering works which has a vegetated boundary line.

The southernmost section of the Site borders Phase 1 of the Horsford development which is currently under construction. This area is proposed to be a Public Open Space area that separates the two phases of development. The easternmost boundary of the Application Site is an arable field. A post and wire fence divides the arable land and defines the boundary.

The northern boundary fronts onto Green Lane. There is a dense field boundary which is on the boundary line of the Site and creates a separation between the Lane and field. On closer inspection this field boundary vegetation consists of a number of deciduous native shrub and tree species as identified in Tim Moya Associates Arboricultural Report (P230311-PD-21). Also on the northern boundary are a small number of residential properties. These properties have vegetated margins that are shared with the Site. This particular boundary includes a number of large trees that will be of benefit to the Site design.
LANDSCAPE DESIGN STRATEGY

The landscape proposals help to contribute to the quality of the semi-rural character by creating a series of open spaces and pedestrian networks that enrich the local environment establishing a distinct sense of place. The landscape composition responds to the semi-rural character of the site, providing a transition from rural to the built form of Horsford.

Landscape Design Principles:

- Create an integrated landscape scheme which relates to the surrounding rural character whilst having its own sense of place.
- Create safe and attractive public spaces with pedestrian routes. Ensure good connectivity and ease of movement across the site to surrounding areas, including links with surrounding public rights of way and connections to recreational resources i.e. Local forest.

- Where space allows implement a robust, visually appealing planting scheme which is both attractive and relates to adjacent character and streetscape. The proposed planting scheme will relate to orientation and hydrology creating a contextually appropriate scheme.

- Use of hard landscaping materials that fit the character of the area and where appropriate are permeable therefore incorporating free draining hard surfacing, reducing surface water run-off.

- Establish ecological corridors that traverse the site, enhancing existing boundary vegetation and creating new wildlife linkages.

- Incorporate native trees and shrubs (where space permits) to encourage wildlife and enhance the habitat value of the site.

- Retain and re-use existing topsoil for use on site following construction where appropriate.

- Ensure that boundaries to the site are given careful consideration and serve as vegetative buffers. This will follow LCA guidance and serve to create privacy and make sure the site has a natural feel.
THE LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS

Proposals
The proposed development offers an opportunity to secure recreational benefits for the local community as well as for new residents through the provision of a new framework of public open space which will contribute to the green infrastructure provision within the village.
THE LANDSCAPE PROPOSAL

The integration of 259 dwellings at the proposed development within north Horsford is enhanced by the sensitive response to the village character and adjacent rural landscape and the creation of landscape features throughout the development. Specifically:

• This scheme will be ‘set’ within its character setting by relating to the open fields to the east and forested areas to the north. Views are often restricted or filtered by proposed and existing trees which is typical of the current location and helps the proposed scheme to fit in to the context. The development pattern and layout of the proposal, as developed by Boyer architecture, is derived from Horsford village to the south and integrates in an effort to fit the proposals in with the adjacent residential framework. This Site is to connect with the village to become part of the whole and design proposals seek to ensure this.

• Green Lane frontage is to be re-enforced with native tree planting. This is to include tree species found in adjacent Horsford Forest to visually link the Site to its context and take on the character of North Horsford. This approach ensures that transition from rural to semi-rural is less abrupt and more gradual. Retaining the majority of existing hedges on this boundary is vital to screening the Site from this frontage and retaining ecological Site features.

• ‘The Village Green’ will be pedestrian-friendly and used for both informal play and active recreation. This generous and well overlooked green is to become a feature of the Site and an asset to Horsford. This public space will be for the community.

• A ‘green link’ that runs north to south through the Site serves as a vital ecological link through the site, linking to Horsford Forest.

• Establish a landscaped zone to the eastern Site boundary to provide a transition and integration with the surrounding agricultural character. This can also be said of the southern boundary, adjacent to Butterfly Mill Development. These spaces connect and are to contain a number of trees of which most will grow to become large parkland specimens.

• Working with the drainage strategy created by Richard Jackson Associates to include underground collection of surplus water. This will ensure water from roads is collected swiftly and held appropriately; water on driveways permeates through block paving and soft landscaped areas contribute to the management of rainfall.

[Image: Heathland landscape incorporated into Green Lane boundary]
PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

The design proposals afford large amounts of open space for everyone to enjoy. These spaces are multifunctional, providing adequate space for recreational games, dog walking, exercise, sport, ecological enhancement and many other purposes.

POS adjacent to phase 1 and on eastern boundary

This linear strip of soft landscape separates the two developments by David Wilson Homes (Eastern). Large houses will flank each side of this space with their frontages turned to create a dialogue with the proposed largely grassed area. The space does not have an intended function and as such is to be treated as an informal rural space that will be the location for a number of parkland style trees such as Oak and Scots Pine.

The eastern edge of this space will have a large native hedgerow that separates the Application Site physically but not visually from adjacent farmland.

POS adjacent to Green Lane

This linear section of POS is geographically located as the closest area of the development to Horsford Forest. A curtilage of soft landscape has been designed into the Site layout so that houses are set back from Green Lane, therefore allowing existing soft landscaping i.e. trees and hedges to become features of the landscape. The existing trees are to be combined with an extensive amount of proposed tree planting using species that are found in Horsford Forest. Furthermore, this area is proposed to contain pockets of heathland planting of Erica cinerea, Ulex gallii and Calluna vulgaris. This will extend the area of this rare habitat type which at one time covered Norfolk prior to plantation planting. Furthermore, this will create habitat for the Silver-Studded Blue Butterfly found locally.

Formal POS

The formal Public Open Space is named as such as it breaks away from the rural concept of the rest of the Site to deliver a differing character type that is hidden in a secluded area of the development. This is by no means to say that this area is not predominately vegetated, as it is, but it is to say that the spaces are slightly straighter than anywhere else on the Site. This space contains a Local Area of Play for young children that is safe, owing to the perimeter estate railings and hedges that surround the area, and convenient, owing to its position in the development. There are a number of proposed trees spaced evenly around the perimeter of this area that shade the area slightly and create formal structure. An oak is to become the most dominant tree in the space. Finally flower beds, designed for winter colour and summer flower surround a circle of hard landscape with benches arranged to be in the sun and at angles appropriate for conversation.

The Site’s overall open space provision will accord with Broadland District Council’s Supplementary Planning Document on Recreation Open Space.
PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

The Village Green
The largest of the spaces by area is the Central Public Open Space, which is designed as a traditional village green. This space comprises of elements found at traditional village greens in the east of England and is intended to be used in precisely the traditional fashion, as a meeting place and recreational asset. The space is defined by a row of Lime trees that are evenly spaced around the perimeter of this POS in combination with timber bollards that will create a barrier to vehicles but will be permeable to pedestrians. The western edge of the space is to be planted with trees for ecological value and creates a substantial section of the north to south ecological green link. The final element of this POS is the Local Equipped Area of Play designed as a space of imagination and fun for all children in Horsford. The design combines natural and purpose built play equipment. This transpires in design terms into a play area surrounded by mounding with tree planting and boulders in suitable positions that also contains slides, balancing equipment and climbing nets that encourage children to use differing skills as they play. Encircling individual play equipment pieces will be rubber matting combined with grass that will make fall zones safe but will remain in character with the natural feel of the space. Benches and bins are also provided within this amenity area.
CHARACTER AREAS

The design proposals for the Application Site see the Site split into character areas. Whilst ensuring that a cohesive design is created, it is important that there is variety in the street scene which translates in design terms into having different features, material colours and plants on selected road types. The character areas are designed in such a way that they will flow into one another and there will be no breaks in continuity.

**Primary street**
Design principles to be used on the main (type 2) roads that run through the centre of the site.

**Public Open Space boundary**
Design principles to be used around the central POS.

**Countryside edge**
Design principles to be used on side streets and private driveways that are adjacent to areas of open space, this also contains some parking areas.

**Side streets**
Design principles to be used on secondary (type 6) roads, this includes some parking areas.
PLANTING PALETTE

To reflect the character of the site and the surrounding area through tree planting, while providing a strong identity to the development, the planting palette comprises of a range of plants suitable to the location, expected climate, soil conditions and aspect.

A range of tree species are proposed for the Horsford Site. It was felt that above all other elements of the landscape, it will be the trees that unite this site with its context, create structure and add longevity to the proposals. The range of trees will be extensive and appropriate to the contextual tree palette. Some varieties of tree have been selected for their suitability to survive in the street scene. All trees are to be planted in soft landscaped areas and collectively the network of trees will help to establish green corridors through the Site of benefit to wildlife.

Hedging to the front of properties will be used extensively. All hedge plants are evergreen and will be used to define the boundaries of properties, thus creating defensible space from the street scene.

The majority of plants proposed on the scheme are to be shrubs. This shrub based plant palette will provide summer flower colour and winter structure and will be largely evergreen. A plant palette of this nature will create a vegetated setting to all properties. A smaller amount of herbaceous species, ferns and grasses will complete the palette and will ensure that seasonality is not a forgotten element of this planting design.

Finally, bulbs are to be planted at important nodes on site. The only bulb species to be used will be Narcissus pseudonarcissus, a wild variety of daffodil.

Tree species:
- Acer campestre ‘Elegant’
- Amelanchier lamarckii
- Amelanchier x grandiflora ‘Robin Hill’
- Betula pendula ‘Tristis’
- Carpinus betulus
- Carpinus betulus ‘Frans Fontaine’
- Fagus sylvatica ‘Dawyck’
- Malus ‘Golden Hornet’
- Pinus sylvestris
- Prunus padus ‘Albertii’
- Pyrus calleryana ‘Chanticleer’
- Quercus robur
- Sorbus aucuparia ‘Aspleniiifolia’
- Tilia cordata ‘Rancho’

Shrub & Herbaceous species (beneficial to wildlife):
- Aucuba japonica ‘Crotonifolia’
- Hebe ‘Great Orme’
- Lavandula angustifolia ‘Munstead’
- Pyracantha ‘Sappho Yellow’
- Rosa ‘Fru Dagmar Hastrup’
- Skimmia japonica ‘Kew White’
- Anemone hupehensis ‘September Charm’
- Bergenia ‘Bressingham Ruby’
- Geranium ‘Johnson’s Blue’
- Salvia nemorosa ‘Caradonna’
- Polypodium vulgare
BOUNDARY TREATMENTS

Boundary treatments are an important consideration with regards to the Application Site. The thresholds with the context must be treated dutifully and have been designed to respect the adjacent land. This aligns with The Landscape Character Assessment for the area which notes the importance of boundaries in relation to settlements. To retain the qualities of the character area designers should: ‘Seek to ensure that potential new developments comprise a fully integrated landscape and urban design strategy, which is consistent with the local landscape character and screen existing and potential harsh settlement edges’. Analysis of the local area provides evidence of vegetated boundaries, mainly used as field boundaries.

Currently the existing vegetated boundaries are an important feature of the Application Site and as such will be encouraged to thrive and are to be safeguarded and enhanced where they are indicated to be retained (shown in Tim Moya Associates’ Arboricultural Report - Assessment of trees in relation to development for planning purposes P230311-PD-21). Existing hedge boundaries are to be retained as much as possible on the boundary of the site to Green Lane. The Landscape Management Plan submitted by Liz Lake Associates outlines specific management regimes that will promote the health of the existing hedgerow.

The Site boundary to the south is to be less understated and the threshold of the Site is to merge into the Butterfly Mill development by way of extensively grassed areas with pedestrian and bus links. The line of sight between the two development phases is to be filtered owing to extensive tree planting, however this will be an entirely permeable boundary.

Boundaries to the east and west of the Site are similar in their nature. These boundaries are to see extensive and tall native hedgerow planting to a height of approximately 2m tall when planted. These areas are indicated on the masterplan. The existing boundary treatments to the rear of properties on the west side of the Site are to remain in place and are not to be replaced. The native hedgerow will be placed adjacent to the Site boundary on this side of the site, serving as a native corridor for animals and for screening purposes. The western boundary adjacent to the agricultural farmland is also to be planted with a linear native hedgerow in combination with a timber post and rail which will mark the site boundary line.
CONCLUSION

Landscape Management Strategy
The long-term maintenance / management of the landscape will be covered in a detailed management plan which has been provided as part of the planning application to Broadland District Council.

Overall the scheme responds positively to the surrounding semi-rural character and environment. The sensitive integration of the scheme, using plants of local origin and where possible, retaining and enhancing important views both from, within and surrounding the Site promotes a smooth transition from the agricultural hinterland to the built form on the edge of the village of Horsford.