



Land to the East of Windermere Road, Kendal

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

November 2010

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

- 1.1. This report details a landscape & visual appraisal that has been carried out by FPCR Environment & Design for a proposed residential development on land to the east of Windermere Road, Kendal. The location and context of the application site is shown on Figure 01. The surrounding study area has been assessed by map study and field analysis to determine the likely extent of any potentially significant landscape and visual effects.
- 1.2. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of the proposed scheme has been conducted encompassing the “Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment” (GLVIA) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2002, and “Landscape Character Assessment. Guidance for England and Scotland” (LCA) published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage 2002.
- 1.3. An Illustrative Masterplan (Figure 06) has been prepared in response to the analysis of the site’s characteristics, and this demonstrates that a sustainable combination of “Green Infrastructure” and residential development can be accommodated to the east of Windermere Road.



Plate1: Illustrative Masterplan

2.0 BASELINE LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

National Landscape Character

- 2.1. The site is located to the east of the A5284 (Windermere Road) at Kendal, Cumbria. The site lies within Natural England's countryside character area 19, South Cumbria Low Fells and borders the countryside character area 20, Morecambe Bay Limestone. The Key Characteristics of both character areas are as follows;

South Cumbria Low Fells

- A pastoral landscape with substantial woodlands and large mature trees which form a rich mosaic of textures, patterns and colours.
- Undulating low fells and ridges dissected by the two lakes of Windermere and Coniston Water, numerous streams and minor river valleys covered by a dense pattern of semi-natural, mixed and conifer woodlands with small-scale enclosures of semi-improved grassland.
- Rugged fells, over 300m in height, with a diverse pattern of rock outcrop, heathland, tarns and becks, small wetlands and mires, rough grassland, bracken and small broadleaved and coniferous copses.
- Well-managed land with a parkland character associated with the edges of the principal lakes, valley bottom locations and large country house estates.
- Well maintained dry stone walls, villages, hamlets, isolated farms and barns and large country houses built from local limestone and slate.
- An intricate pattern of undulating and twisting minor roads serving the dispersed settlements.

Morecambe Bay Limestone

- Low undulating farmland of pastures divided by dry stone walls with infrequent, individual, windswept trees but also areas of scrub and broadleaved woodland.
- Conspicuous limestone hills, with cliffs and scree slopes, rising above the low-lying pastures and wetlands.
- Inland, scrub woodland including juniper and unimproved grasslands on gently undulating hills divided by shallow valleys with hedgerows and damson orchards.
- Stately homes set in parkland landscapes with well-maintained gardens.

Regional Landscape Character

- 2.2. The Cumbria Landscape Character Assessment was carried out in the mid 1990s by Cumbria County Council. This study was later reviewed in 2002 and most recently in 2009. The assessment defines and describes 13 landscape types and 34 sub types. The site area lies within Landscape Type 7: Drumlins and Sub Type 7B: Drumlin Field. The Key Characteristics are summarised below:

- Tracts of high drumlins
- Rounded tops with steep sides

- Distinct landform grain
 - Hedges and stone walls form strong boundaries
 - Streams and wet hollows are found in the valleys and dips between the drumlins
 - Farms and development often nestle in intersecting valleys
 - Narrow lanes with tall hedges and steep banks criss cross through drumlins
 - Drumlins are cut through by the M6 motorway, railways and power lines
- 2.3. The assessment includes a 'Vision' statement for this particular character area, which states: 'This well composed landscape will be conserved and enhanced to retain its distinct characteristics. Its unique topography will be maintained and enhanced thus remaining a striking asset. The intrusion of new farm building will be minimised, field pattern maintained and strengthened and natural features restored through careful conservation. The small woods and hedgerow trees complementing the scale, relief and field patterning of the drumlins will continue to do so after being conserved and restored. Any small scale development will be sited and aligned to compliment the grain and form of the drumlins and a good network of paths and recreational routes will exist'.
- 2.4. The assessment also provides guidelines for potential future changes to the character area. The following guidelines are applicable to the potential development at land to the east of Windermere Road, Kendal.

Natural and Cultural Features

- Plant small pockets of indigenous woodland within hollows or on prominent hilltops and woodland belts between the lower more open drumlins.
- Establish new hedgerow trees using indigenous species or tagging selected saplings to replace mature stock.
- Resist large scale planting that would obscure or swamp the pattern of drumlins.
- Create new ponds, tarns and wetlands in hollows and by streams
- Discourage boundary removal and field enlargement.
- Maintain dry stone walls in the traditional manner.

Development

- Ensure that all developments are of high quality and well related to the distinctive grain and scale of this landscape. Avoid prominent hill tops or cutting across slopes, particularly with reference to tall structures such as pylons and turbines and, take advantage of natural containment by landform and trees.
- 2.5. West of Windermere Road the site area borders the Lake District National Park. A Landscape Character Assessment was carried out in 2008 by Chris Blandford Associates. This study was commissioned jointly by The Lake District National Park Authority, Friends of the Lake District, The National Trust and Natural England and findings are summarised below:

2.6. The site lies within Landscape Character Type C: Coastal Limestone. The Key Characteristics are as follows:

- Rolling farmland is underlain by Carboniferous Limestone geology, which has a rough texture where limestone outcrops occur;
- Limestone hills (examples include Scout and Cunswick Scars), with cliffs and scree slopes, rise above the low-lying pastures and wetlands;
- Limestone features include steep scarp slopes, rocky outcrops and limestone pavements, set within a grazed landscape, with patches of woodland; and
- A combination of semi-improved pasture, species-rich calcareous grassland (often with pockets of limestone heath and juniper scrub) and semi-natural woodland dominate land cover and provide ecological interest.

Topography (figure 02)

2.7. The site lies between 50 and 90m AOD within the low-lying land located to the north of Kendal and to the west of the River Kent. To the north of the site, the land rises steeply up towards a ridge line of approximately 80m AOD, which runs parallel to the nearby railway line. The central parts of the site sit within the valley bottom at 60 - 70m AOD and remain relatively flat with some undulation in parts. To the southwest the land rises comparatively gently up towards A5284 Windermere Road at 90m AOD, where beyond the site boundary, the land begins to rise sharply towards the A591 and then finally up to Cunswick Fell at approximately 210 AOD.

Local Landscape Character (figure 03)

2.8. This combines the above review of published information on landscape character with a detailed field survey to assess the landscape resource, visual amenity and the key qualities that define consistent areas of landscape character in the local area. The study area has been broken down into the following character areas (figures 03 & 04).

Character Area 1 – Valley Bottom and River Kent

2.9. This area includes the site itself and is located to the north of Kendal and stretches from the foothills of the Cunswick Fell across to the River Kent. It is characterised by the low-lying undulating pasture land interspersed with elongated whaleback hills otherwise known as drumlins, a prime example being The Todds, which is located beyond the site to the northeast. The strong field boundaries formed by drystone walls and well managed hedgerows help to create a distinct field pattern that crosses up and down the drumlins. The area is punctuated by occasional small groups of mature broadleaved tree planting and individual parkland estate trees. Brooks and streams also meander through the hills between Lane Foot and Burneside Village. The character area also includes the village of Burneside, with a mix of traditional limestone cottages and 20th Century detached and semi-detached houses. Isolated converted farms and barns such as Lane Foot and Hollins Farm, and large country houses such as Madgegill are infrequently located across the area. The River Kent and the Windermere Branch Line dissect the character area. The character area is overall considered to be of medium to high sensitivity to change.

Character Area 2 – Kendal Town: Northern Residential Area

- 2.10. This character area includes a mix of detached and semi-detached housing predominantly from the 20th Century. This area is dominated by the former post war estate of Hallgarth, which is centred on Hallgarth Circle. The mass of dull grey rendered 2 storey terraced and semi-detached houses are broken up by the generous amounts of green open spaces, wide grass verges and large individual parkland trees. The linear house pattern along the A5284 Windermere Road, which leads from the north past the site, towards the historic core of Kendal is mainly occupied by traditional early to mid 20th Century semi-detached houses. More modern residential estates can be found further east of this area including the recent housing development located along and off Briarrigg and Moore Field Close. The character area is overall considered of low to medium sensitivity to change.

Character Area 3 – Cunswick Fell and Kendal Fell (Lake District National Park)

- 2.11. This character area mainly lies within the Lake District National Park, which borders the site and the A5284 Windermere Road. The character area is dominated by Cunswick Fell and Kendal Fell. These two fells are dissected by the main transport link into the Lake District – A591. The land rises steeply from the low-lying land to the east of Windermere Road up towards the summit of the fells, where the topography becomes more gently rolling. Kendal Golf Course occupies the majority of land on the summit of Kendal Fell. Cairns, steep scarp slopes and rocky outcrops can be found within this area such as Kettlewell Crag. These are set within an overall grazed land cover with occasional scrub and large woodland blocks such as Scar Wood and Ash Spring located on Cunswick Scar. The settlement pattern is very sparse within this character area mainly consisting of scattered farmsteads and houses with the exception of the hamlet of Plumgarth located on the B5284. Numerous drystone walls and public footpaths meander along the contours of the fells. The character area is overall considered of high sensitivity to change.

Conclusion

- The potential development area is well related to the existing urban edge, and is low lying and contained in relation to the surrounding countryside. It is lacking in features of interest and as such is of low sensitivity in itself.
- The wider character area is considered to be of medium to high sensitivity to change. It is low-lying undulating pasture land interspersed with drumlins. It has strong field boundaries formed by drystone walls and well managed hedgerows along with small groups of mature broadleaved tree planting and individual parkland estate trees. There are opportunities to minimise adverse impacts on this character area by introducing structural planting along the northern boundaries of the site and an opportunity to improve the existing gateway into Kendal.
- The residential areas adjacent to the site are of low to medium sensitivity to change, with parts having a very green and open character. There are opportunities to minimise impacts on this character area by introducing new planting along the boundaries and by extending green links through the site.
- The character area that includes a small part of the Lake District National Park is considered of high sensitivity to change. However, new tree planting along the western site boundary with

Windermere Road will minimise intervisibility between the character area and the site. Windermere Road itself provides a very robust defensible boundary.

3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- 3.1. The scheme can create a sustainable residential development for up to 130 dwellings set within a robust Green Infrastructure framework of community parkland, woodland planting and new public rights of way. The Green Infrastructure will include the principal area of Community Park land mainly located on the higher ground within the northern parcel of the site together with a Central Greenway running through the core of the site along the existing public footpath route to Lane Foot. A new Gateway frontage landscape will be created along Windermere Road. Figures 05 and 06 show the Development Framework Plan and the supporting Illustrative Masterplan.
- 3.2. The primary Community Park component is proposed to the north atop the highest point of the site, affording widespread views across the surrounding countryside. The Community Park will be carefully designed to take advantage of the site's topography, preventing built development from encroaching on the higher ground. This will avoid intrusion into long distance views from the north and west. The Community Park will maximise diversity of experience and will create a variety of different habitats in order to enhance the site's biodiversity. An integrated network of footpaths will connect all the community park spaces with existing rights of way leading out into the open countryside.
- 3.3. The Central Greenway builds upon the existing public footpath which connects Low Garth to Lane Foot and the surrounding countryside. This Greenway will be flanked by the new built development on either side to create a vista from the existing urban edge by framing and channelling the views to the surrounding countryside. The low lying land will provide a suitable location for the proposed balancing pond and surrounding wetland habitats, which will be designed to attenuate site drainage whilst providing ecological and public amenity.
- 3.4. The Gateway frontage landscape located along Windermere Road will improve the sense of arrival into Kendal from the north. It will be carefully designed to take advantage of the steep topography adjacent to Windermere Road and to prevent built development encroaching on the higher ground. The new access will be well designed to enhance the approach to Kendal by introducing new landscaping, town signs and traffic calming measures.
- 3.5. Interconnected woodland copses will be included along the northern and western boundaries of the site to create a robust development edge, screening and softening views into the new development and existing urban edge of Kendal, whilst creating an appropriate rural interface to the north. Large individual parkland trees will be introduced throughout the Green Infrastructure. Existing hedgerows will be conserved and managed and dry stone walls retained or reused elsewhere on site.
- 3.6. The proposals have been developed in conjunction with FPCR's ecologists and arboriculturalists to ensure that wildlife corridors and existing habitats are retained and enhanced. There is a significant opportunity to improve biodiversity.
- 3.7. The proposals respect the guidelines set out in the Cumbria Landscape Character Assessment, described earlier at 2.4. In particular, built development will be of high quality, responding positively to the grain, scale and topography of the local landscape character.

4.0 VISUAL ANALYSIS

- 4.1. The visual impact of the proposal has been assessed by reference to a series of key viewpoints, from around the site. The locations of the viewpoints are shown on Figure 08.

Viewpoint 1

- 4.2. This represents the view from Cunswick Fell to the west of the site. The majority of the site is screened from this public footpath by the immediate topography of the fell itself and scattered vegetation. The only part of the site visible is the higher ground located in the northern parcel of the site. The view includes the existing built development on the northern edge of Kendal including the residential area of Hallgarth and large industrial area to the east of the River Kent. The effects on this view will be no change.

Viewpoint 2

- 4.3. Similar to Viewpoint 1 this represents the view from Cunswick Fell to the west of the site but located on the summit of the fell. The entire site is screened from this public footpath by the immediate topography of the fell itself and scattered vegetation. The view includes the existing built development on the northern edge of Kendal and the village of Burneside. The effects on this view will be no change.

Viewpoint 3

- 4.4. This represents the view from the public footpath off Hollins Lane across to the site towards the northern urban edge of Kendal. The majority of the site is visible through the scattered groups of mature broadleaved trees and field boundary vegetation. The residential properties that make up Lane Foot provide partial screening to parts of the site. The proposed residential development will be visible in the short term and during construction and effects during this time will be slight adverse. Within 15 years and as the new structural landscaping along the northern boundary matures, impact on views will be reduced to negligible.

Viewpoint 4

- 4.5. Similar to the Viewpoint 3 this represents the view from the public footpath from Burneside Village across to the site towards the northern urban edge of Kendal. The majority of the site is visible with partial screening from the hill within the northern parcel of the site and from occasional groups of mature broadleaved trees and fragmented hedgerows. The proposed residential development will be visible in the short term and during construction and effects during this time will be slight adverse. Within 15 years and as the new structural landscaping along the northern boundary matures, impact on views will be reduced to negligible.

Viewpoint 5

- 4.6. This represents the view from the public footpath located on the foothill of The Todds across to the site up towards Kendal Fell. The majority of the site is screened from this public footpath by the immediate topography, which is typical of this drumlin character area. Scattered vegetation also provides some screening of the site. The only part of the site visible is the higher ground

along the A5284 Windermere Road. The viewpoint includes minimal views of the existing built development on the northern edge of Kendal. The effects on this view will be no change.

Viewpoint 6

- 4.7. This represents intermittent views between the residential properties from the pedestrian and vehicular users of Burneside Road towards the site. Parts of the southern parcel of the site are clearly visible from this elevated position. Whilst the new development would have an immediate slight adverse impact on the view of low-lying land, the higher ground of Kendal Fell would not be affected and the development will provide the opportunity to improve the northern urban edge of Kendal. The long term effects on this low sensitivity transient receptor will therefore be negligible.

Viewpoints 7 & 8

- 4.8. These represent views from the public footpath along Kendall Fell, a popular pedestrian route that leads from Queens Road around Kendall Fell towards Cunswick Fell. From this elevated position the site is partially visible, most noticeable, the higher ground within the northern parcel of the site. The low-lying parts of the site are partially screened by the mature vegetation around the site and by the existing built development along the northern edge of Kendal. There are views of Lane Foot and Magdegill and the village of Burneside beyond. There are medium distance views across the valley bottom of the extensive existing built development within Kendal. Beyond Kendal there are long distance views of the Fells within the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Potential built development will be limited on the higher ground within the northeast corner of the site. Effects on the transient receptors would be slight adverse initially reducing to negligible as the structural landscaping across the whole site matures.

Viewpoint 9

- 4.9. This represents the view from the public footpath along Kendal Fell and Kendal Golf Course. From this elevated position the site is partially visible, most noticeable, the higher ground within the northern parcel of the site. The southern parcel of the site is completely screened by the immediate topography of Kendal Fell. There are views of existing built development located on the northern edge of Kendal adjacent to the site and views of Burneside Village, most notable, the large industrial unit within Burneside Mill. Beyond the site and Kendal there are long distance views of the Fells within the Yorkshire Dales National Park and Lake District National Park. Potential built development will be limited on the higher ground within the northern parcel of the site. Effects on the transient receptor would be slight adverse initially reducing to negligible as the structural landscaping across the whole site matures.

Viewpoint 10

- 4.10. This represents the view from the A5284 Windermere Road across the valley bottom towards the site and Kendal beyond. The majority of the northern parcel of the site is clearly visible from this viewpoint on the elevated position along Windermere Road. The residential properties at Lane Foot and the surrounding mature tree planting provide some screening of views of the low-lying parts of the northern parcel. The southern parcel of the site is clearly screened due to the immediate topography along Windermere Road. There are medium distance views of the existing built development within Kendal. Beyond Kendal and the immediate surrounding area there are

long distance views of the Fells with the Yorkshire Dales National Park. It can be seen that the majority of close views of the site will be screened by potential structural landscaping along the northern boundary. However, there will be direct views of upper storeys and roof tops in the proposed development from this elevated viewpoint. Effects on the transient receptor would be slight adverse initially reducing to negligible as the structural landscaping within the northern parcel of the site matures.

Viewpoint 11

- 4.11. This represents the view from the public footpath adjacent to Lane Foot across the northern parcel of the site towards the northern urban edge of Kendal. The northern and central parts of the site are clearly visible whilst some nearby tree planting provides screening of the southern parcel. It can be seen that the majority of views will be screened by potential structural landscaping along the northern boundary. However, there will be direct views of upper storeys and roof tops in the proposed development. The receptors are of high sensitivity. Impact will be moderate adverse initially reducing to slight adverse as the structural landscaping along the northern boundary matures.

Viewpoint 12

- 4.12. This represents a typical view from the Hallgarth Estate looking west across to the site. The site is clearly visible from this location. There is also medium distance views of Kettlewell Crag situated on Kendal Fell. The viewpoint also indicates that all properties bordering the site have views on to the site. Effects on the transient receptor along High Sparrowmire would be substantial to moderate adverse initially reducing to slight adverse as the structural landscaping within the northern half of the site matures.

Viewpoints 13 & 14

- 4.13. Similar to Viewpoint 12, these viewpoints have close views looking north across the site. The site and the adjacent housing are clearly visible from these transient receptors. The higher ground within the northern parcel of the site is a prominent feature of the site. There are glimpses of the residential properties at Lane Foot and Madgegill over the rolling topography. There are also medium distance views of the A5284 Windermere Road and Cunswick Fell beyond. The viewpoint also indicates that all properties bordering the site have open views onto the site. Effects on the receptors would be moderate adverse initially reducing to slight adverse as the structural landscaping within the southern half of the site matures.

Viewpoint 15

- 4.14. This represents the view from the A5284 Windermere Road across the site and valley bottom towards Kendal and Burneside. The site is clearly visible from this location on the higher ground adjacent to the site. Occasional individual mature trees along the southern boundary provide interest but minimal screening of the site. There are glimpses of the residential properties at Lane Foot and Madgegill over the rolling topography and through the gaps in the sporadic tree planting. There are medium distance views across the valley bottom of the existing built development within Kendal. Beyond Kendal there are long distance views of the Fells with the Yorkshire Dales National Park and beyond Burneside there are long distant views of the Fells

within the Lake District National Park. It can be seen that the majority of close views of the site will be screened by potential structural landscaping along the southern and western boundaries. However, there will be direct views of upper storeys and roof tops in the proposed development from this elevated viewpoint. Effects on the transient receptor would be moderate adverse initially reducing to slight adverse as the structural landscaping within the southern parcel of the site matures.

5.0 CHARACTER CONCLUSION

Character Area 1 – Valley Bottom and River Kent.

- 5.1. The character area is considered of medium to high sensitivity. It includes the site itself, and the proposals will change the character of a portion of this character area completely. Initial effects and during construction will be locally moderate adverse. However, the potential high quality development would retain and enhance the existing positive landscape elements such as mature trees and hedgerows, drystone walls and rolling topography, will eventually create a housing development with a very strong sense of place, which links positively to the surrounding landscape. Effects within 15 years will be slight adverse.

Character Area 2 – Kendal Town: Northern Residential Area

- 5.2. This character area is of medium sensitivity. The majority of this area has limited intervisibility with the site due to the housing that surrounds it. The proposals will draw on the local character of the area, in particular the generous amounts of green open spaces, wide grass verges and large individual parkland trees. The introduction of potential green links / corridors from the Hallgarth estate will help the new development tie into the existing road and footpath network, whilst creating vistas and framing views through the site towards the surrounding countryside. Effects after 15 years are therefore assessed as slight beneficial.

Character Area 3 – Cunswick Fell and Kendal Fell (Lake District National Park)

- 5.3. The Character Area is of high sensitivity. The local topography and sporadic vegetation within the character area limit intervisibility with the proposals. The proposed development will have no significant impact on the character area when compared to the context of the site and the surrounding urban form of Kendal. Effects on this character area are assessed to be negligible.

6.0 VISUAL CONCLUSION

Findings are summarised below

- Approximately 7 houses along High Garth, 12 along Low Garth and 2 along High Sparrowmire back directly onto the site. There are opportunities to reduce potential impact on these properties by strengthening the existing tree planting along the boundaries of the site. Effects on these receptors will be substantial to moderate adverse in the short term, reducing to slight adverse in the long term.
- There are a limited number of clear views into the site from certain parts of the surrounding roads of High Garth and High Sparrowmire and these will be retained as green links / corridors, in particular the view from High Sparrowmire which will align with the proposed public open space located on the higher ground within the northern parcel of the site.
- There will be views of the site from the A5284 Windermere Road, although the retention of the individual mature trees and the introduction of additional tree planting will minimise impact. This will also help to improve the gateway into Kendal.
- There will be partial long distance views of the site from the elevated positions on Kendal Fell, although these will be predominantly of the tops of housing only and will be seen in the wider context of Kendal.
- There will be partial views of the site from the low-lying land to the north near Burneside, although these will be predominantly of the tops of housing. New landscape treatment along the northern boundary of the site will improve the appearance of the existing urban edge of Kendal.

- 6.1. Whilst built development would inevitably alter the landscape and visual character of the site, significant opportunities arise to create a robust appealing Green Infrastructure framework which takes advantage of natural assets. This will enhance public amenity and biodiversity, producing a more appropriate transition between Kendal and the surrounding countryside. New development will be successfully assimilated at the same time.