

Landscape Design Statement

Rabbit Ings Regeneration Scheme near
Royston, Barnsley

On behalf of the City of Wakefield Metropolitan
District Council and Yorkshire Forward

By The Farningham McCreadie Partnership /
WYG Planning and Design

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The regeneration proposals for Rabbit Ings have been designed to maximise the site's inherent opportunities whilst firstly remediating the degraded, post industrial landscape and secondly, introducing a range of new habitats and amenity leisure uses for the benefit of the wider community.
- 1.2 The site in its current condition is seen as a significantly degraded, low quality landscape in both visual and amenity terms, and in this context, the regeneration proposals will be seen to offer several new recreational and amenity resources including a network of new multi-use access tracks and a mountain bike track as well as interpretive facilities including new sign posts and information boards. New football pitches, catering for both adult and junior levels, will also be introduced along with a new changing room and associated meeting room facility which will be accessed via a new, gated vehicular entrance and car park.

2.0 Access, Recreation and Amenity Value

- 2.1 In its current condition, the site is under-utilised in terms of its potential value for recreational and amenity use. There are 2 No. existing rights of way crossing the site and the condition of these routes remains poor, particularly during periods of inclement weather. The site is also the subject of unauthorised access by 4x4s and motorcycles.
- 2.2 An extensive network of 3.2m width multi-use access tracks will be introduced to significantly enhance access and circulation throughout the site, whilst also providing links to the Trans Pennine Trail (TPT) and the existing rural footpath network. The network of multi-use access tracks has been designed where possible, to accommodate the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) guidance and promote use by people of all abilities via lower level routes which wrap around the bottom of the colliery tip slopes. The new multi-use access track network will be complimented by interpretative facilities such as directional sign posts, information boards, and safety notices
- 2.3 Access into the site will be significantly improved through the introduction of several new lockable vehicular gates and pedestrian barriers including 'K barriers' and kissing gates. These new access barriers have been carefully designed to allow users of all abilities to safely access the site, whilst restricting unlawful use by 4x4 vehicles, quad bikes and motorcycles.
- 2.4 The regeneration proposals also include for the reintroduction of sports pitches to the south western sector of the site. This will include 2 No. junior football pitches as well as 2 No. full sized adult football pitches. This will be complimented by a new changing room facility and car parking for 94 No. vehicles (including 4 No. disabled spaces). A new gated access road off Lund Hill Lane will ensure these new facilities remain secure whilst not in use. An additional open access car park with 8 No. spaces (including 2 No. disabled spaces) will be provided off Lund Hill Lane on the site's western boundary (to the north of the pallet yard).

3.0 Woodland

- 3.1 Areas shelterbelt planting have established along the eastern edge of the tip's southern slopes, and whilst it is the intention to retain as many trees on site as possible, some will be lost due to the necessary landform modifications, which are required to achieve a safe and stable gradient. This tree loss will be offset by the introduction of significant areas of new tree planting, which will include various 'native'

species based mixes of understory, woodland edge and wet woodland. This new planting will extend over approximately 20% of the total site area, and together with the other habitat types introduced, will be seen as a valuable addition to the wider woodland resource of South Yorkshire.

- 3.2 The new woodland areas have been designed to wrap around the lower slopes of the former colliery tip, thereby visually 'anchoring' the prominent landform into the surrounding landscape. The upper slopes of the tip, which are currently covered by patchy areas of neutral grassland, will remain open in character, with views available from the new viewpoint over the surrounding landscape. A stone cairn, which will include information on the various landmarks which are visible from the top of the tip, will mark the location of the viewpoint.
- 3.3 Whilst it is the intention to retain as many trees as possible, the lines of Black Poplar trees which extend around the northern and eastern edges of the existing sports pitch area will be removed as a result of the regeneration proposals. In order to alleviate the poor drainage within the south western sector of the site, and to allow the implementation of new properly drained sports pitches, it is necessary to raise the ground level within the existing sports pitch area by approximately 1m (to allow pipe drainage systems to be constructed). The trees are even aged and over mature and many have been selected for early removal due to their poor condition (refer to Arboricultural Survey by JCA Arboriculturalists) and in this context, the trees would only have a limited life span as part of the regenerated site. A replacement planting strategy, which includes the planting of approx 40 No. semi-mature Common Alder trees has been proposed, and once established, these trees will be seen to provide a similar level of enclosure and formality to the proposed uses within this sector of the site.

4.0 Habitat Retention & Creation

- 4.1 It has been widely recognised that the reclamation of derelict sites provides significant opportunities for enhancing or creating both landscape and wildlife habitats, however, care is needed to ensure that the wealth of natural regeneration that has developed on many post-industrial sites, is fully appreciated and enhanced rather than erased by reclamation. In this context, several areas of existing habitat will be retained and protected throughout the regeneration works and beyond to form important areas of wildlife refuge, public access will be discouraged within these areas with proposed footpaths set back to allow the existing flora and fauna to remain undisturbed.
- 4.2 The areas of neutral grassland, which have established on the upper slopes of the tip, will again be retained where possible, but it is envisaged that due to the necessary landform modifications, some of this will be lost. However, within the regeneration proposals, following the removal of the existing benching and unsightly runoff channels, and the formation of the new multi-use access track network, the grassland will be re-established on the upper slopes of the tip. This will retain the open character of the upper slopes, where views will be available over the surrounding landscape from the new viewpoint. This will also provide a valuable ecological habitat to birds such as skylark as well as mammals such as hare.
- 4.3 In addition, areas of species rich grassland will be introduced on lower lying areas around the former colliery tip. With a suitable management regime established within the site wide management plan, this more diverse grassland type will, offer a different habitat to the neutral grassland on the upper slopes.
- 4.4 The reed beds, which are located along the southern slopes of the former colliery tip, are fed by the drainage runoff from the upper tip slopes. These features have been

identified as valuable ecological assets and whilst some of the reed beds on the tip slopes will be lost due to the necessary landform modifications (to achieve a safe and stable gradient), the regeneration proposals allow for the retention of much of the existing reed bed system, as well as the introduction of new reed beds at the foot of the re-profiled slopes.

5.0 Overview

- 5.1 The introduction of extensive areas of new planting, recreational facilities, including the new sports pitches and changing rooms, as well as a significant increase in accessibility through the introduction of a network of new multi-use access tracks, will be seen as a significant benefit to both the local and wider community. Further to this, whilst there will be significant areas of new 'native' species based planting introduced, the existing ecology within the site will be protected where possible to ensure the sensitive integration of existing habitats.