

## Land at Scredda – Landscape Note January 2021

### Description of the Site and Immediate Context

The site comprises 3 fields (of irregular shape and size) located on the northern side of St Austell, between Scredda and Treverbyn Road in a transitional area between settlement edge, countryside and Chia clay area. It is an area which has seen a great deal of change in recent years, with the closing of many of the China clay pits and building of new residential and commercial developments, including Kaolin Heights to the north and numerous developments along Treverbyn Road to the east. The land further to the north is allocated as an eco community under Eco M1 in the Cornwall Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

The site is located towards the northern end of an elevated landform (the eastern valley side of the St Austell River) much of which along with the China clay spoil heaps forms part of the green backdrop/setting on the north western side of St Austell. The pyramid shaped Sky Tip is a key landmark of the area.

Scredda is a small linear settlement set out on both sides of the Mount Stamper Road. The site is made up of one large field (which adjoins the rear gardens of properties in Scredda) and two smaller fields with access onto Treverbyn Road. The site benefits from a high level of enclosure formed by the boundary hedgerows and adjoining vegetation. Further south as the land rises beyond the site towards the ridgeline the land is more exposed and windswept with fewer trees and much lower hedges giving it a more open character.

### Historic Landscape Characterisation

The site is categorised as Medieval Farmland (HC04) which includes farmland that retains field boundaries that were documented before the 17<sup>th</sup> century and remained unchanged as a result of later enclosures. Typically, these are curved/ sinuous/ irregular in character. These are of historical significance and therefore, changes to the field boundaries should be avoided where possible.

There is an opportunity to enhance and strengthen field boundaries through new planting and long term management where they have been weakened. This will also contribute positively to the ecological habitats on the site and help with small level changes at these boundaries.

### Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Landscape Character Study

The site primarily falls within the CA17 St Austell or Hensbarrow China Clay Area, with a very small part to the south east falling into CA 39 Austell and Luxulyan Valley.

CA 17 is described as:

*“A very varied, dramatic landscape of china clay waste tips and areas of rough vegetation, characterised by open pit mining. The mix of active and disused sites creates a dramatic ‘lunar’ landscape of huge, light coloured waste tips and settling ponds within a relic pastoral farming landscape. A rugged area of great variation and drama. Dominant visual elements include the large white spoil heaps, either conical or flat topped in form, aqua-blue pools, areas of rough ground and natural and naturally regenerated scrub and heath, as well as large quarry pits. The scale of these features contrasts dramatically with the small scale field patterns. The fluctuating and changing condition and relationship of elements in this landscape, and the natural regeneration of heathland, new woodland planting and rough ground provides a vivid and dynamic visual landscape character quite unlike surrounding LCAs”.*

CA 39 is described as:

*“Stretching out to sea out at the headland at Gribben Head this is a wedge shaped section of high plateau land lying west of the Fowey Ria (LCA 21) and wrapping around the south of Hensbarrow Downs, (LCA17). In the north, fingers of high ground, notably Helman Tor stretch out onto the low lying ground of LCA 20 (Mid Cornwall Moors). The low rocky cliffs of the coastline forming the northern and eastern side of St Austell Bay are punctured by the wide alluvial estuary at Par Beach where extensive sands have built up in the mouth of the Par River. This river with its small tributaries winds inland in a flat wide bottomed valleys that have been settled and heavily industrialised or have developed wet woodlands. Another area of alluvial plain stretches inland at Par Moor running up behind the cliffs of Carlyon Bay. The higher ground in this area is heavily built up with the urban centre of St Austell and sprawling residential areas of Carlyon Bay, St Blazey and Par while the coastal zone with long sandy beaches at the base of the cliffs is much used for recreation. At Par the deep water channel created by the river has enabled a docks complex to be developed. On the eastern side leading to pressures of the bay there is no sand and the cliffs are higher and rocky with few sheltered coves, notably Polkerris. Inland a woodland and pastoral landscape dominates, changing to wetland between the settlements of Par and Tywardreath. One main feature is the well wooded Luxulyan Valley that has extensive relics of the mining industry”.*

## **Planning Considerations**

### **Relevant Landscape Designations**

The site is not constrained by any landscape related designations such as an AONB or AGLV, and there are no public rights of way running through or in the immediate context of the site. The closest footpath to the site is 424/35/1 approximately 200m to the south.

The following policies are relevant to the site:

### ***Cornwall Local Plan 2016-2021, relevant policies related to landscape and visual considerations:***

Policy 2 - Spatial strategy, this policy outlines the approach towards sustainable development. It states that development should *“maintain the dispersed development pattern of Cornwall and provide homes and jobs based on the role and function of each place.”* It also identifies named main settlements as best placed to offer opportunities for regeneration and sustainable development. The following objective is set out within the policy (relevant to landscape):

#### 1. Respecting and enhancing quality of place:

Proposals should maintain and respect the special character of Cornwall, recognising that all urban and rural landscapes, designated and undesignated, are important by:

- a. Ensuring that the design of development is high quality and demonstrates a cultural, physical and aesthetic understanding of its location;
- b. Considering the impact of development upon the biodiversity, beauty and diversity of landscape and seascape, character and setting of settlements, wealth of natural resources, agricultural, historic and recreational value of Cornwall;
- c. Identifying the value and sensitivity, of the character and importance of landscapes, biodiversity and geodiversity and historic assets;
- d. Protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural and historic landscape, heritage, cultural, biodiversity and geodiversity assets of Cornwall in recognition of their

international, national and local status, in accordance with national legislation and policy, as amplified by the other policies of this plan.

The site does not fall within a main settlement as defined by this policy. Therefore, a landscape character approach which informs any development proposals would be appropriate in order to identify its special qualities that contributes towards its quality of place. Development would need to incorporate design, form, materials, layout and new landscaping which is consistent with the key characteristics and the objectives/enhancement/requirements of the specific landscape character area assessment. The development would seek to avoid any unsympathetic intrusions into the wider landscape.

Policy 3 - Role and function of places, the policy sets out a hierarchy through which new development up to 2030 will be accommodated. The site is located outside of a named main town and therefore the housing requirement will be met through the following:

- a. Identification of sites where required through Neighbourhood Plans: The Treverbyn Neighbourhood Plan has not yet been adopted and therefore carries no weight.
- b. Rounding-off of settlements and development of previously developed land within or immediately adjoining that settlement of a scale appropriate to its size and role: The council has already suggested that it does not consider the site would be considered as 'rounding off'.
- c. Infill schemes that fill a small gap in an otherwise continuous built frontage and do not physically extend the settlement into the open countryside: The site is not considered to fall within this category.
- d. Rural exception sites under Policy 9: the site is not considered to fall within this category. However, this is dependent on the judgment being that the proposal is not considered to be a 'major development'.

Policy 12 – Design:

*"The Council is committed to achieving high quality safe, sustainable and inclusive design in all developments. Development must ensure Cornwall's enduring distinctiveness and maintain and enhance its distinctive natural and historic character. Development should demonstrate a design process that has clearly considered the existing context, and how the development contributes to the social, economic and environmental elements of sustainability through fundamental design principles.*

*1. As part of a comprehensive place-shaping approach, proposals will be judged against fundamental design principles of:*

- a. *character – creating places with their own identity and promoting local distinctiveness while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation. Being of an appropriate scale, density, layout, height and mass with a clear understanding and response to its landscape, seascape and townscape setting; and*
- b. *layout – provide continuity with the existing built form and respect and work with the natural and historic environment; high quality safe private and public spaces; and improve perceptions of safety by overlooking of public space; and*
- c. *movement – creating a network of safe well-connected routes which are easy to read and navigate by the use of landmarks, spaces, views and intersections; and*
- d. *adaptability, inclusiveness, resilience and diversity – building structures can be*
- e. *easily altered, particularly internally, to respond to both climate change and changing social and economic conditions and provide a mix and pattern of uses; and*
- f. *engagement process – undertaking community engagement, involvement and consultation in the design process proportionate to the scheme.*

*2. In addition development proposals should protect individuals and property from:*

- a. *overlooking and unreasonable loss of privacy; and*
- b. *overshadowing and overbearing impacts; and*
- c. *unreasonable noise and disturbance.*

## **Conclusion**

It is not considered that the site contributes to the green backdrop/setting of St Austell however development proposals would need to demonstrate how they conserve or enhance the landscape character and would need to avoid any unsympathetic intrusions into the wider landscape, such as detrimental impact on the character of skylines or views from public vantage points. Of key importance will be how to maintain the integrity of the medieval field structure. Large set-backs/buffer zones are likely to be required so that the hedges can be sympathetically managed in the future and kept outside of individual plot ownership.

The identified opportunities and constraints than can be used to inform the layout of the site are set out on the attached plan.