

INTRODUCTION

Project Scope

The project scope is to design and obtain Statutory consents for new affordable homes on the Brockloch site in Rafford, comprising 10No. new build homes and 2No. self build plots. The housing mix is discussed later in the report. The client for the project is the Finnerne Development Trust, described below.

This project is considered to be Phase 1 of two phases, the second phase being a community development within the site, which is as yet undefined.

This report covers RIBA Stage 1- *Preparation and Briefing*.

Project Partners

Finnerne Development Trust (FDT) - is a company with community interests which aspires to be a driving force in the economic rural development of the Finnerne area. Finnerne is an area of stunning natural beauty to the south of Forres with a population of just over a thousand people. Finnerne Development Trust (FDT) is a charity registered in Scotland, SC049191, regulated by the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

Communities Housing Trust - is a registered charity set up in 1998 to help rural communities secure long-term solutions to their local housing needs. It works with communities across Scotland, to help them understand their housing requirements and assist in the development of projects to deliver affordable rural homes to meet their needs, playing a crucial role in supporting the long-term viability of communities. CHT is acting as Development Agent for FDT.



Aerial view of the Brockloch site



BRIEF

Project Brief

The project brief is comprised of two Phases, of which this report considers Phase 1.

Phase 1 is to develop 10 new-build affordable homes and 2 new self-build plots. Of the 10 new-builds, 8 will be developed as rental properties and 2 will be developed for discounted sale.

Phase 2 is to develop community facilities, perhaps including electric vehicle charging points, polytunnel, allotments, orchard, small rentable shared working space, all with associated servicing and drainage.

Phase 1

The housing development is to be of a robust construction, with space provision to meet *Firm Foundations* guidance. In addition, the new affordable homes will be required to meet Housing For Varying Needs Part 1 and, of course, current Building Regulations including fire suppression.

Finderne Development Trust has identified the following objectives for the development as a whole:

- Robust, low maintenance and future-proofed homes.
- Low running costs for occupants to heat and maintain their home at adequate temperatures year-round.
- Well-ventilated homes which are not susceptible to problems linked to moisture and high occupancy rates.
- Sufficient space to dry clothing externally or internally in an area appropriately designed.
- Garden areas that are appropriate in size and well drained, the divisions of which do not detract from the community feel (i.e. high opaque fencing etc)
- Shared areas requiring maintenance by occupants or contractors will not be discouraged. This scope has not been defined yet but may include allotments, polytunnel and orchard.



- On the overall outline masterplan submission for planning include all possible non-housing elements which may include: Polytunnel, allotments, orchard, small rentable shared working space.
- Target EPC to be minimum 'B' to enable additional funding to be sourced as this is a minimum requirement for some funders.
- Once appointed, discuss level of Building Standard sustainability award which will likely be a minimum of 'Silver'. Note - since the update to the Scottish Building Regulations in February 2023, it is possible that 'Gold' standard may be required in order to meet the requirement for EPC B.

Housing Mix

The housing mix has been defined by Finderne Development Trust in conjunction with the Communities Housing Trust as follows:

Rental:

- 4 x 2 bedroom 4-person semi-detached houses
- 2 x 3 bedroom 5-person semi-detached houses
- 2 x 2 bedroom 4-person semi-detached accessible houses.

Discounted sale:

- 2 x 3 bedroom 5-person semi-detached houses.

Self Build Plot:

- 2x serviced self-build plots sized to accommodate a 4-bedroom 5-person detached house.

Note: Following the public consultation, FDT are considering the housing mix for the development, particularly the impact of self-build plots. As such, the above mix is likely to be altered prior to kick off of the next design stage.



LOCATION

The Brockloch site is located within the village of Rafford, on the B9010, ten minutes drive south from the town of Forres.

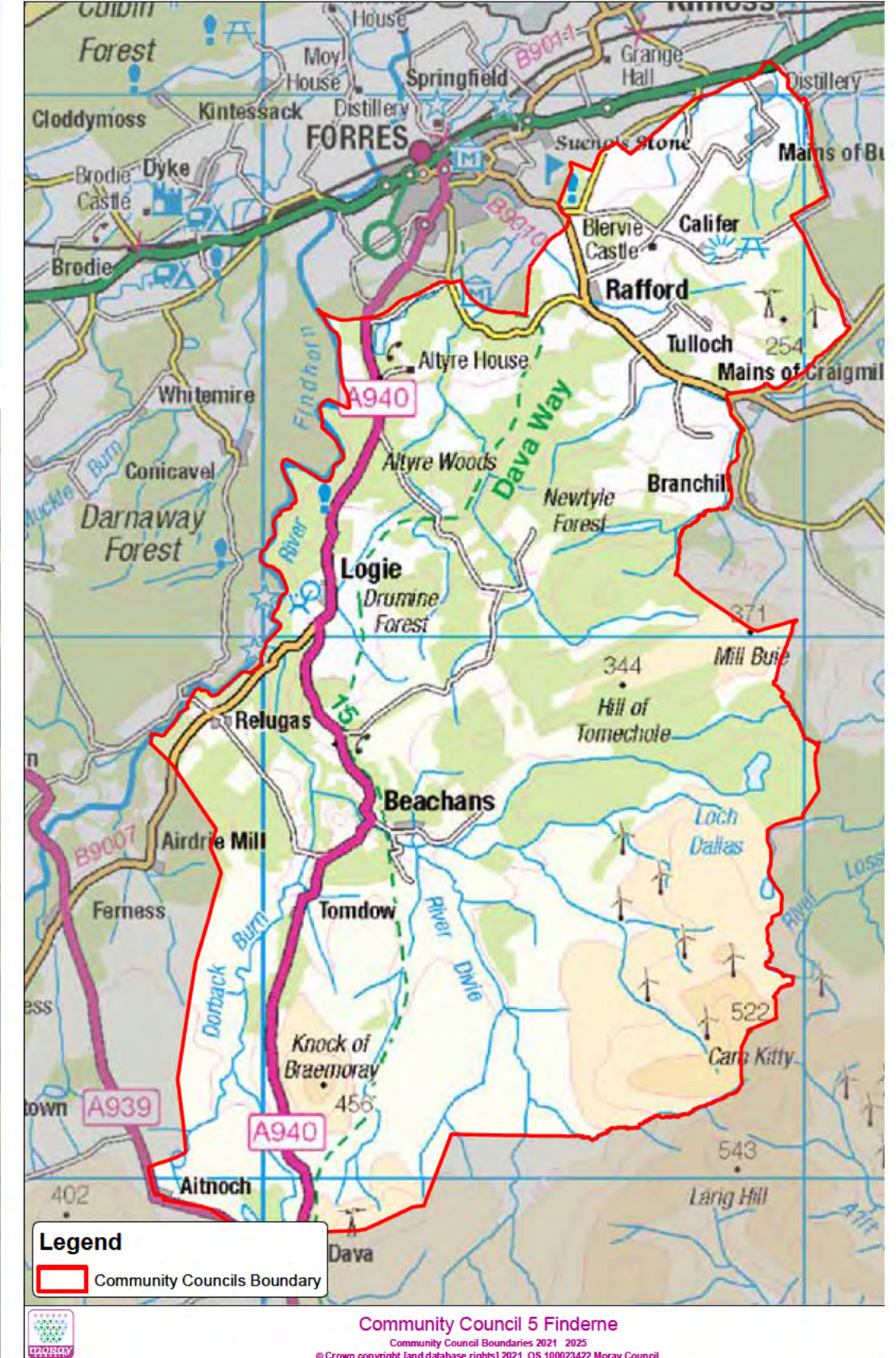
Rafford sits within the community council area of Finnerne, which stretches across an area to the west of the Moray Council boundary. The Finnerne Community Council meet in two locations - Rafford in the north and Edinkillie in the south. Logie is also a significant settlement within Finnerne.



Moray Council area with Finnerne CC in pink



Aerial of the locality with the site in red



Finnerne Community Council (CC) area, Rafford in the north

SITE ANALYSIS

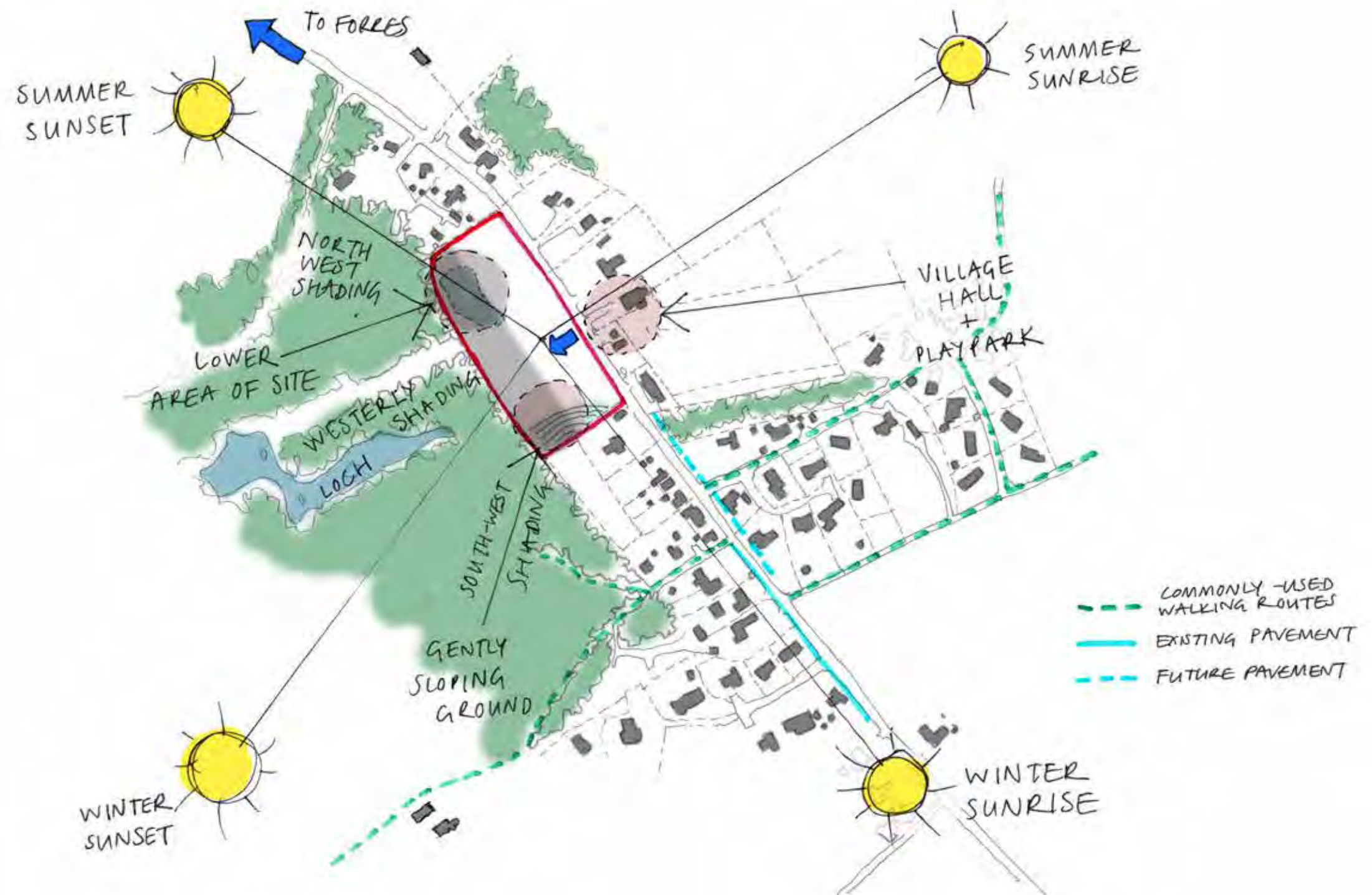
Site

The site is a green field site within the village of Rafford, located to the west of the public road the B9010. To the south west the site is bounded by mature private woodland. To the north and south boundaries can be found existing residential properties.

The site is heavily shaded by the woodland to the south-west, and it is not known whether this is likely to be felled in the medium-long term.

Key points to note:

- Lower area to the north of the site which offers gravity-fed drainage option
- Gently sloping land to the south of the site
- Central connection to the Village Hall, which sits opposite, creates a public area at the heart of Upper Rafford.
- Overhead power lines running north-south along the centre of the site and west into the private woodland.
- BT comms cable at the public road side feeding residential buildings adjacent to the Village Hall.
- Detached pattern of development across Rafford with medium-large plot sizes (500-1500m²) for single homes.
- Village playing field and play park to the rear of the Village Hall.
- Existing surface water drainage culverts the public road from the Village Hall side and is dispersed within the Brockloch site. Possible neighbour's soakaway and local authority tank within south end of site.



MORAY COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN

Local Development Plan

The Brockloch site is identified in the Moray Council Local Plan. Named 'R-1', it is described as follows:

This site extends to 1.7 hectares and has a **capacity for 12 houses**. Access into the site should be by a **single access**.

A **visibility splay of 4.5mx95m** must be provided at the junction onto the B9010. Consideration to be given to safe routes to school, which may take the form of a **bus bay** for school buses. A **2.0m wide footway** must be provided along the frontage of the site, complete with surface water drainage.

Drainage arrangements (including the satisfactory disposal of surface water to avoid flooding) must be acceptable to SEPA and Scottish Water. This will not necessarily be by "mains" drainage. Connection to the existing septic tanks would require Scottish Water to upgrade the facilities and this would be investigated with the developer. Alternatively the developer could investigate the provision of a private septic tank.

Development proposals should incorporate traditional features in the house designs. The area to the rear of the existing houses must be retained as opens space/ landscaping.

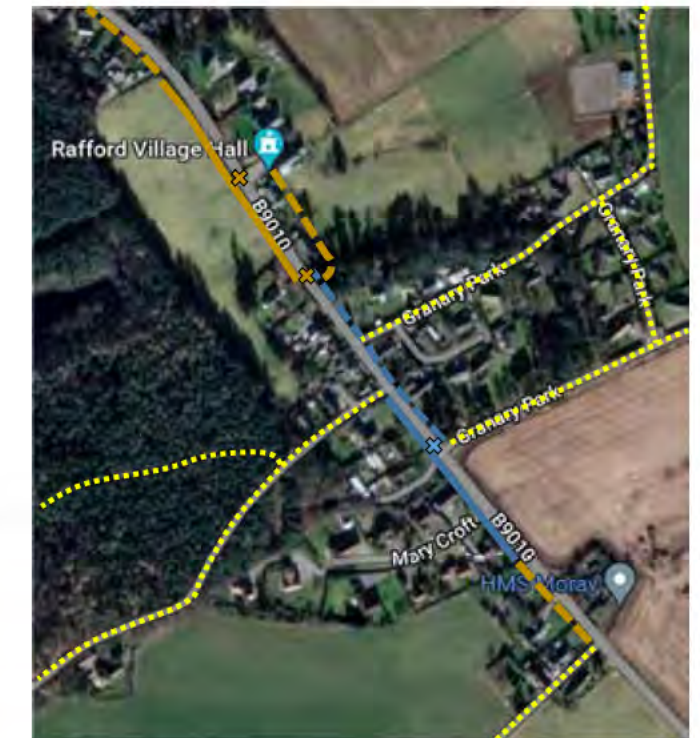
Houses should **respect the scale and character of the traditional houses in the village**. **Overhead cables will require to be relocated**. A natural stone wall must be provided along the road frontage reflecting a common feature in the village.



Rafford Pavements and Footpaths

December 2022

Upper Rafford



- Existing pavement
- - - - - New pavement (original plan rejected)
- - - - - New pavement (agreed)
- Future pavement (post Brockloch housing)
- - - - - Possible pavement extensions (not agreed)
- Commonly used walking routes
- ✕ Potential road crossing (to be agreed)
- ✕ Potential future road crossing

Pedestrian Improvements

It is widely recognised within Rafford that improved pedestrian routes are required, the upgrade of which is ongoing as shown in the graphic above.

It has been confirmed in the Local Plan and during the Pre-App process that a 2m wide footway will be a planning requirement along the east boundary of the Brockloch site.



DESIGN DEVELOPMENT - INITIAL PROPOSAL

Initial Proposal

The sketch opposite was included in the tender, therefore was undertaken prior to undertaking any client or community engagement. The Architect focussed on the following:

- creating a sense of place at the heart of the new housing development.
- biodiversity across the community and see a number of ways in which the rural setting can help to create a really thriving and sustainable community.
- cost control is essential, particularly for the Finderne Development Trust who will rely wholly on grant funding to deliver their aspiration.
- homes should be as future proofed as far as possible with consideration to being robustly detailed and designed for low maintenance. This will include consideration of cladding specification, window detailing and landscaping immediately around the home.
- keeping running costs to a minimum will be addressed through our Fabric First approach - investing in the building to keep energy consumption low
- environment including breathability, air permeability and ventilation.



RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING - CASE STUDIES

Ardgeal, Kincaig

- 10x sustainable homes for low-cost home ownership that protects the ongoing affordability if they are sold in the future
- Local timber and materials used.
- Local trainees were involved in the construction of six homes.



Staffin, Isle of Skye

- 6x affordable 3-bed homes, providing accommodation for 12 adults and 8 children.
- Tackling a lack of available accommodation locally and a falling pupil roll at the local school.
- Mix of traditional and modern materials.



Old Sawmill, Rothiemurchus

- 6x self-build homes on Rothiemurchus land including four affordable plots.
- Rural Housing Burden attached; a legal title condition that protects the property affordability in perpetuity and prioritises the local community.



Inverdrurie, by Aviemore

- 6x affordable homes for Albyn Housing provider.
- Single point of vehicle access to existing road plus pedestrian routes.
- A mix of colours and materials to provide variety across the development.



DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Design Development

During RIBA Stage 1, the sketch proposal for the Brockloch site was updated in line with the guidance from the Moray Council Pre-App process and feedback from the public consultation in November 2022.

The design team took into account the requirement for a single access point to the site from the public road, and it is suggested that it sits opposite the Village Hall to create a central 'hub' to Upper Rafford.

The previous drainage proposal was deemed sensible in regards location and size, and is shown in the shadier north-west side of the site.

Plot and road layout were updated, including the Moray Council suggestion for the acceptable minimum size of self-build plot.

Key

Phase 1

1. New access to public road - opposite village hall
2. Community orchard
3. 10x new houses, semi-detached 2 and 3-bed homes
4. 2x house plots for sale to self builders - provision to be appraised by FDT prior to the next design stage.
5. Sustainable drainage systems (SUDs) to serve new development
6. Bus bay and new pedestrian footpath
7. Existing village hall

Phase 2

Scope to be defined - New community building, polytunnels, allotments, EV charging.



PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Comments, Questions + Response

A public consultation on the Stage 1 proposals was held in Rafford Village Hall on Thursday 16th February 2023. The afternoon and evening event was well attended, with a wide range of views expressed regarding the proposals. Some of the key comments have been presented here, with a summary of the answers provided on the day. It should be noted that several frequently occurring themes, particularly around road safety, are not necessarily within the power of the Brockloch project.

Concerns around neighbour overshadowing, proximity of new houses and levels on the site

The number of houses on the site is restricted to 12 by the Local Plan designation, and Moray Council have indicated that a 'design code' would be necessary for the self build plot, which can restrict the height of new builds. In addition it is proposed to create a 'no build' buffer zone to the north boundary, meaning that new buildings would be in excess of 30m from neighbouring properties mitigating overshadowing despite level differences

The site is very shaded, especially in winter

Similar to the neighbouring properties, the Brockloch site will experience afternoon shade, particularly during winter. This can be partially mitigated through placement of new houses on the east side of the site, by careful orientation of openings and if possible making use of top/sky light

Interested in a co-op model of housing and participatory approach to design

Additional traffic is a concern, as are existing traffic speeds in the village

The increased traffic will have been taken into account during the Local Plan process, and any new development must be approved by the Moray Council Transportation Team. It is hoped that an increase in the number of families, a new community facility and the access point being opposite the Village Hall will create a public 'hub' for the village which could stimulate wider action around traffic calming and road safety.

Rafford does not need affordable housing, there are no shops and no public transport

Since 2015 the Moray Local Plan has identified the Brockloch site for 12 new housing units. Key to sustainable new housing will be a Moray-wide transport strategy to strengthen links to Forres where many public services are located.

Excited to see well considered proposals



What are the timescales for the project?

The design proposals need to be developed and taken through Statutory consents - Planning and Building Warrant prior to work beginning on site. This process could take a further 6 months, but is largely dependent on funding routes being secured.

Who really benefits from it?

Would the new houses include sheds or garages?

The plots will be sized sufficiently to allow future outbuildings, however funding for affordable housing would not typically support the cost uplift for garages or sheds

What is the landscape strategy?
Biodiversity and landscape strategy will be developed during the Planning design phase.

Rafford does not need affordable housing. It does not make sense in this location

Worried about drainage and water run off

The engineer's ground investigation report and trial pits show that this particular site has good drainage options. Drainage design includes for existing surface water collections, and should therefore improve the drainage on site.

Can drainage and ground investigation reports be shared with self builders?



MATERIALS PALETTE

Construction Materials



Slate roof and rendered walls are a typical combination of materials within Morayshire. The ambition to include dry stone walling is also in keeping with the area, and will be balanced against cost.



Profile metal roofing and timber cladding is another common combination, often seen on outbuildings and netting sheds. The profile metal can be supplied in a variety of colours from grey through to red.



Timber cladding can be modified in a variety of ways, from paint through to heat and steam treatment to prolong the life of the product.



If left to weather, larch cladding, which is durable, will naturally grey over time. Careful detailing around windows and eaves prevents drips and staining.

Landscape and biodiversity



Proposals can include planting of small and medium native trees and bushes including rowan, wild and/or bird cherry, wych elm, hazel, holly, common alder, willow, hawthorn and blackthorn - creating softer boundaries and improving habitat for wildlife.



Tree planting softens development in the landscape



Permeable hard surfaces - helps to control water run off



RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENTS - CASE STUDIES

GALE Centre, Gairloch

New built to the Passivhaus low energy standard, the centre houses a community cafe, shop and tourist information services. It provides a permanent hub for the community, employment opportunities and a venue for pop-up arts and crafts events.

Adjacent to the GALE centre, further development has transformed the former derelict site in the centre of the village combining affordable homes with social, commercial, education and training needs.



The Barn, Ardgay

The refurbished Barn gave a dilapidated building a new lease of life, and is owned and managed by the Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust. The Barn provides working space for local businesses in forestry, digital, community larder, architect and hairdressers.

The adjacent Drivers Square has been reinvigorated with the launch of the Barn and construction of affordable housing to the west of the square. The external space is used for community events, with Electric Vehicle charging points and a polytunnel.



Phase 2 Ideas

A variety of community facilities has been suggested for the Phase 2 area of the Brockloch site including -

- EV charging for vehicles and bikes
- Community self-service shop / vending machines
- Community fridge
- Co-working spaces or workshops



Bike charging at Falls of Shin



Electric car chargers, Ardgay



Black Isle Dairy self-service shop



Egg vending machine



Muir of Ord 'MOO' Community fridge