

## Rolling Estate Claylands

### Landscape Sensitivity & Change

This is a sloping valley side landscape type associated with the landscapes of the Ancient Estate Claylands.

The Rolling Estate Claylands generally comprehensively settled with substantial villages and towns, including Saxmundham and Wickham Market. The cores of villages are generally on the valley sides although settlement change and enlargement have, in places, expanded them into the plateau landscape.

The enclosure pattern is usually more complex, often with smaller fields, than the adjacent Ancient Estate Clayland landscape. It is wooded with plantations and parklands. The ancient woodland that is characteristic of the adjacent plateau landscape is generally only found on the edges of this landscape as it merges into the adjacent plateau.

The vernacular building style can show a degree of uniformity, with a localised estate style often apparent. Farmsteads can also exhibit features of C18<sup>th</sup> and C19<sup>th</sup> “improvement” with ranges of “model farm” type buildings.

There are a series of important historic parklands throughout this landscape, which are extensive enough to stretch onto the surrounding plateau landscape. These parks have often started life as medieval wood pasture before experiencing several subsequent periods of change.

The spatial relationship of this landscape to the adjacent valley floor means that change and development here can have a profound visual impact on the adjoining valley floor.

Finally, much of this landscape is adjacent to, or within, the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This creates an additional sensitivity in a landscape that is already highly sensitive because of the landform and the presence of designed historic landscapes.

### Key Forces for Change

- Expansion of settlements.
- Expansion of garden curtilage.
- Change of land use, especially the creation of horse paddocks.
- Impact of deer on the condition of woodland cover.
- Changes in the management and use of landscape parklands.

### Development management

#### **Exaggerated visual impact of the height of buildings and structures**

In these valley side landscapes, the visual impact of new vertical elements is

increased by the landform. Therefore new buildings are likely to have a significant impact on both the character and visual amenity of valley floor and valley side landscape types. The setting of specific features and elements of these landscapes, such as small-scale enclosure patterns or historic buildings and monuments, can also be significantly damaged.

The majority of development will, to some degree, be subject to this problem. Therefore, it is essential to manage this issue effectively, taking every opportunity at the earliest stages of the development of the proposal to modify and improve it, or to be clear with the applicant that the impact of the proposal is unacceptable or may be at a high risk of refusal due to landscape impacts.

### **Settlement form and expansion**

Valley side landscapes have historically been a focus for settlement. However, large-scale expansion should be confined to the adjacent plateau. In this location the landscape and visual impact can be more easily mitigated with effective planting and design.

Settlement extension in a valley side landscape is likely to have a significant visual impact and adversely affect the character of the landscape, including that of the adjoining valley floor. A comprehensive Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is essential to identify the risks and the options for mitigation. These developments tend to create a highly visible new “roofscape” on the sides of valleys. The effect of this can be partially mitigated by planting within the development as well as on the perimeter and offsite. It is essential to ensure that there is sufficient space within the development for effective planting, and that any requirement for offsite planting is considered at the earliest stage. The proposals for mitigation planting must always be commensurate with the scale of the development and the capacity of the landscape to absorb the development without damage to the landscape character.

It is important to maintain the existing pattern of settlement clusters on the valley sides and minimise visual intrusion on the very sensitive landscapes on the valley floor. New building here needs to be carefully located; it must be of appropriate scale and style as well as being integrated into the existing pattern of vegetation and settlement. There may also be specific styles related to a particular landed estate, which should be considered as a design option. Avoid, wherever possible, ribbon development on valley sides and slopes when this will cause settlement clusters to merge.

### **Large-scale agricultural buildings on or near valley sides**

The siting, form, orientation and colour of these buildings make a considerable contribution to mitigating their impact. However in a valley side situation, especially if located on the skyline, they will have a considerable visual impact. It is preferable to seek a location outside the valley where the visual impact of this type of development can be mitigated much more effectively.

### **Barn conversions and extensions**

These proposals require careful consideration and considerable attention to the detail of form and styling. Redevelopment proposals should also enhance the contribution these historic sites make to the wider landscape.

Specifically, any new building should usually be close to the existing cluster of buildings and should be subordinate in size to the principal buildings. The design, including the finishes such as tiles, brickwork, mortar, or wooden cladding should be appropriate for the style of buildings present. Staining used for exterior boarding should be capable of weathering in the traditional way, as a permanent dark or black colouring is not locally appropriate. As farmsteads in this landscape have usually developed over an extended period there may be a range of styles on site. However, where the influence of a landed estate particularly strong, C18<sup>th</sup> and C19<sup>th</sup> “model” type farmsteads are more likely to be found.

The change of land use, especially to residential curtilage, can often be more disruptive to the wider landscape than modifications to the buildings. The changes to the surrounding land from agricultural to residential use, which entails the introduction of lighting and other suburban features, can be extremely intrusive. Unless the site is well hidden, it may be necessary to impose clear conditions relating to the extent of garden curtilage and how this is screened from the wider landscape. Usually the risk of new domestic curtilage damaging the visual amenity and character of a valley side landscape is significant because of the shape of the land.

#### **Manage the expansion of garden curtilage**

The expansion of a garden which is not in keeping with the existing local pattern has a significant impact on the local character and form of the built environment, as well as on historic patterns of field enclosure. The visual impact of domestic clutter and garden paraphernalia can be particularly intrusive in these sloping landscapes. New or expanded curtilage should always be designed to fit into the local context and respect the established pattern.

In many cases the extent of gardens in a village or cluster within a parish is relatively uniform, with all gardens following a defined boundary with agricultural land. If settlement expansion is required then the local pattern must be respected wherever possible. However, new garden curtilage may be required in other situations, such as in association with barn conversions, or dwellings for agricultural workers in open countryside.

If a large area of agricultural land is to be attached to a domestic dwelling the planning authority should define the extent of the garden curtilage. The objective is to create a clearly defined and agreed distinction between the wholly domestic areas and, for example, land to be used as a paddock.

Effective boundary planting is essential for reducing the visual intrusion of garden extensions into the open countryside. This should be conditioned as part of the change of land use and is especially important when a section of arable land is taken in, because in these cases there are often no existing hedgerows or other boundary features present.

The style of boundary fencing and hedging to be used can have a significant impact. The use of appropriate low impact materials, such as post and wire fencing is preferable to close boarded fencing or fence panels. If the latter are required they should be screened by appropriate hedging. The use of locally appropriate hedging species including hawthorn, field maple, dogwood and other typical clayland species

should be specified in preference to non-native plantings such as leylandii or laurel for example.

#### **Change of land use to horse paddocks**

The proliferation of post and rail fencing and subdivision of land into small paddocks using temporary tape can have a significant negative landscape impact. In ecologically sensitive areas the impact on the quality and condition of grassland can be adverse. Mitigation strategies in terms of design, layout and stocking rates should be employed where possible.

It may be possible to screen the site with an effective and appropriate planting scheme. However, it may also be necessary to specify the type and extent of fencing to be used. On a sloping site post and rail or white tape can be particularly intrusive. If necessary brown or green fencing tapes should be conditioned and planting should be required to soften the impact of the post and rail fencing. Furthermore the location of field shelters and material storage areas should be specified, to minimise the landscape impact of these activities.

Opportunities should also be taken to design a field layout that is in keeping with the local field pattern or the historic pattern of boundaries.

#### **Impact of deer on the condition of woodland cover**

Large-scale deer control should be supported and individual sites may require deer fencing. New woodland plantings, as well as screening and mitigation schemes, will require effective protection from deer to support their establishment.

#### **Changes in the management and use of landscape parklands**

Any proposals for change could have a negative impact on these historic landscapes. The majority of sites, regardless of designation status, will require an overarching management plan or strategy to guide changes. This should cover the maintenance, preservation and management of existing features, as well as the restoration or creation of new or lost ones. When sufficient information is not available the applicant should undertake detailed background research. Planning applications that affect historic parklands should therefore be accompanied by a suitable management plan or other detailed evidence, to support the proposals.

### **Land Management Guidelines**

- Reinforce the historic pattern of sinuous field boundaries.
- Recognise localised areas of late enclosure hedges when restoring and planting hedgerows.
- Maintain and restore historic parklands.
- Maintain and increase the stock of hedgerow trees.
- Increase the area of woodland cover; siting should be based on information from the Historic Landscape Characterisation and in consultation with the Archaeological Service.
- Maintain and restore the stock of moats and ponds in this landscape.