

Ancient Estate Farmlands

Landscape Sensitivity & Change

This is a flat plateau of loamy well draining arable land, which forms the central part of the Shotley peninsular. This landscape is unique in Suffolk with a mix of “modern” rectilinear field systems with Ancient woodland and parklands

The settlement clusters are on the edge of this landscape and spread onto the adjacent Rolling Estate Farmlands. The villages are quite distinct and tend to be clearly separated, with only a very few of the hamlets or wayside clusters of housing that are such a feature of the claylands. Outside the villages the landscape is scattered with a few farm with perhaps a cottage associated with them. It is only on the western fringe of this landscape, at the boundary with the claylands, that there is a more mixed pattern of settlement including village clusters, hamlets and farmsteads.

There is an array of ancient and plantation woodland throughout this landscape type and a series of historic parklands. Despite the presence of ancient woodland and much ancient settlement archaeology, this is a relatively “new” landscape of C18th and C19th estate farms, characterised by large rectilinear fields.

Key Forces for Change

- Changes in the management and use of landscape parklands
- Conversion and expansion of farmsteads for residential uses
- The introduction of new agricultural techniques
- Leisure as a driving force for changes in economic activity
- Impact of deer on the condition of woodland cover

Development Management Guidelines

Settlement form and expansion

The settlement pattern in the Ancient Estate Farmlands has a strong tendency towards clustered villages, surrounded by a scattering of individual farmsteads. Wherever possible this clear distinction should be maintained.

Barn conversions and extensions

Given the range of substantial and “late” historic farm buildings within this landscape type there is considerable demand for these to be converted to other uses, although this may not be acceptable in terms of policy. If, however, such applications are supported the result may be large and extensive complexes of multiple dwellings or offices and light industrial units. C19th (and later) farm buildings are capable of accommodating new uses while conserving the character of the landscape rather more easily than older farm structures.

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 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.

The change of land use, especially to residential curtilage, can often be more disruptive to the wider landscape than modifications to the buildings. 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. The impact of new garden curtilage in this landscape is potentially even more significant than that in a clayland landscape because of the characteristic settlement pattern found here, as discussed above.

Large scale agricultural buildings in open countryside

The right choice of siting, form, orientation and colour of these buildings can make a considerable contribution to mitigating their impact. The plantations, shelterbelts, and tree lines found throughout this landscape provide opportunities to design locally appropriate planting schemes to reduce the visual impact further.

The siting of buildings should relate to an existing cluster of buildings whenever possible. Usually, although not in all cases, using a shade of the colour green is preferred as this will integrate well with vegetation. The correct orientation of the building can also significantly change the visual impact of the development, and this consideration should always be explored.

In addition to new planting to mitigate the impact of a development, the location of the development in relation to existing trees that act either as screening or as a backdrop should be carefully considered. The planning authority should ensure these trees are retained for the lifetime of the development. The option to modify the management of existing hedgerows should also be explored. New planting should be designed to integrate the development into the character of the landscape, and may consist of both backdrop and screening planting.

The care and maintenance of the planting should be made a condition of these developments. In many cases the landscape impact of these projects is only acceptable if it is mitigated by effective planting. The applicant should therefore provide a detailed scheme of planting and aftercare, which can form the basis of a condition. Furthermore, depending on the risks to be controlled, the planning authority may need to consider a 106 agreement to secure the landscaping and design requirements for an extended period.

Landscape of leisure - Golf courses, holiday complexes, caravan sites, tourist centres

The regular and recent nature of this landscape means that it does have more potential capacity, in respect of *visual impact*, to accept these developments but

effective design and mitigation measures will be vital.

However, the *impact on the character* of the landscape both directly and indirectly may be highly significant and it may not be possible to effectively mitigate these impacts. Therefore such developments would constitute a profound and undesirable change to landscape character, especially given the deeply rural and tranquil nature of the Shotley peninsular.

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.

Visual impact of cropping and production, and land use changes

The changes in cropping practices that have taken place across some of the Ancient Estate Farmlands, such as the use of fleece and plastic, as well as outdoor pig production, have had a significant effect on the landscape. The siting and style of structures subject to planning control, such as static feed bins pigs, poly tunnels or reservoirs should be appropriately conditioned to minimise their landscape impact.

Land Management Guidelines

- Reinforce the historic pattern of regular boundaries.
- Restore the quality of elm hedges with coppice management.
- Maintain, enhance and restore locally distinctive holly hedges.
- Restore, maintain and enhance the network of tree belts and pattern of small plantations found across much of this landscape type.
- Restore, maintain and enhance the historic parklands and the elements within them.
- Restore and enhance the condition of ancient woodlands including the effective control of deer grazing and browsing.