THE CARADON *DESIGN* GUIDE

SECTION C

LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

Supplementary Planning Guidance

July 2000

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Talland Bay

INTRODUCTION

Caradon District Council has produced the Design Guide to help conserve and strengthen the special character of the built environment, especially its traditional towns and villages. The aim of this Section is to provide guidance on how to analyse the landscape setting of a site, in order to integrate future development into the wider context, thereby ensuring that new building respects the landscape of a particular locality and conserves the distinctive character of the district. Other sections of the Design Guide will provide valuable background information.

Section A	Explores the concept of local distinctiveness.
Section B	Provides information on Design within the Planning System.
Section D	Looks at Buildings in context.
Section E	Promotes good housing design.
Section F	Offers guidance on conversions.
Section H	Considers Householder development.

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Many settlements in Cornwall have developed over centuries, and traditional forms of building are often well integrated into their landscape setting. However, much new development has been carried out without regard to the effect on the surrounding landscape, and its wider visual impact, particularly when seen from roads, rail routes or across valleys or distant vantage points. Insensitive development can undermine the unique landscape quality of Caradon District.

BEFORE YOU START

Consider employing a good designer who will bring both experience and inspiration to the design process. The resulting solution will assimilate the various constraints and requirements of the brief, the site, and its relationship to its landscape setting, to create a desirable place to live and work, that is visually pleasing to the eye, and appropriate to its context.

ALWAYS visit the site and its environs. View it from as many different points as possible. Consider what design features will help it integrate with its surroundings.

SITE ANALYSIS AND CONTEXT

It is crucially important that a thorough analysis of a site and its landscape context is carried out prior to design and development. This is especially important for larger developments. A creative response to the constraints and opportunities, revealed by analysis, will help to generate a design solution that fits comfortably into the surrounding landscape context.

Depending on the nature, scale and location of the development proposal, the Council may require evidence that the following analyses have been carried out as part of the design process:

Looe nestles in its steep sided river valley. The lack of flat land and the exposed climate has generated a tight knit settlement pattern of narrow lanes.

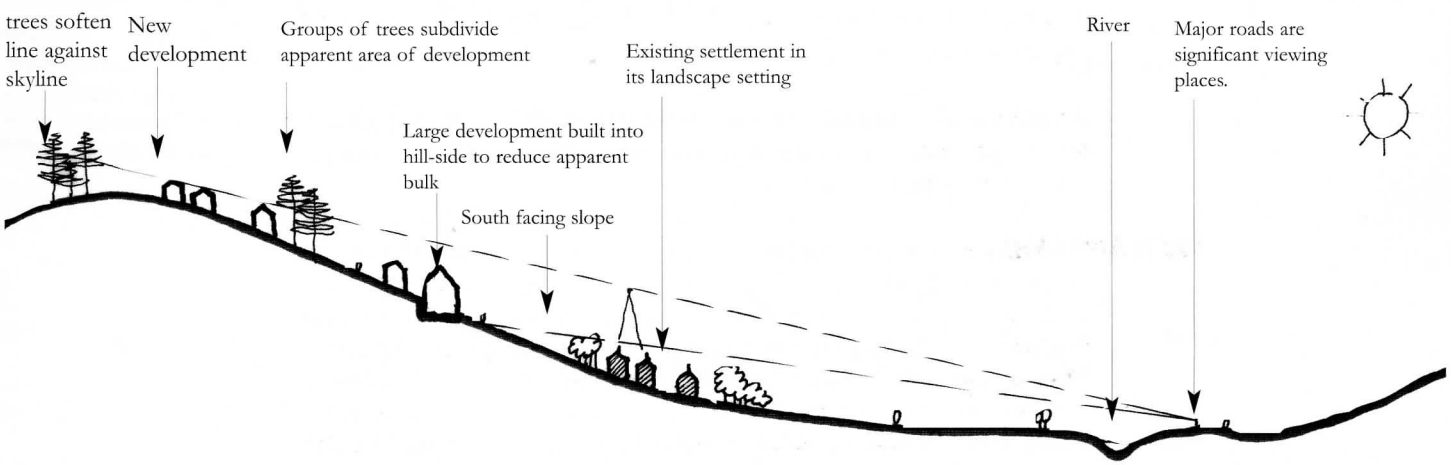
This hilltop church and stand of pines creates a distinctive landmark. Such views may provide important focal points for a development providing a strong sense of place.

A farm building with its stand of trees to provide shelter on the edge of Bodmin Moor.

Site Plan and Land Ownership

An Ordnance Survey Plan showing the following features will help you assess the landscape context of your site.

- **Contours**
  The landform of your site and its context could have very significant effects on the density, form and visibility of built development.
- Surrounding **towns, villages and farmsteads**
- **Routes** giving long distance views of the site including major roads, lanes, public footpaths and rail routes.



Landscape Character

A visual analysis of the aesthetic and subjective qualities of a landscape will help determine the nature and layout of new development. The following aspects could be analysed :

- **Aesthetic qualities** of the site and its environs
- Quality of views **to** and **from** the site
- Definition of areas of specific **landscape character**, e.g. moorland, pasture, field size and pattern. This can help identify the essential nature of a place, and assess the impact of future development on the landscape.

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Undulating landform needs special consideration. Roads and development can be prominent from considerable distances.

Landform

A good understanding of local landform will help to determine the visual impact of development, and how much of the site can be developed economically.

- To help develop this a **contour** plan will provide information on the shape of the landform.
- A slope analysis diagram, prepared from a contour plan, will indicate aspect, degree of slope and indicate areas suitable for development.
- Cross sections will provide an understanding of **visibility,** to and from the site. The effect of existing vegetation, the position of roads and vantage points should be noted, as well as landform.
- Generally, slopes in excess of 1:5 have implications on the design and appearance of development. Well designed split-level schemes can relate more closely to existing ground levels.
- Establish a fixed datum point on-site, or close nearby.

Landmarks do not have to be built structures. This stand of trees near Looe is a memorable element in the landscape.

A farmstead nestling in the rolling landform on the edge of Bodmin Moor.

Lerryn is a dispersed settlement on the Fowey Estuary, which is characterised by a scattered character. Future development should respect this pattern.

Photographic Assessment

- A thorough photographic record can help during the design process. Panoramic views are useful in assessing the impact of future development on the landscape setting.

Climate

It is also worth compiling climatic information :

- Identify **south facing** slopes and orientation to benefit from solar gain. Also the daily east/west sun path.
- Note potential **frost** and mist hollows.
- Note existing treebelts **affording shelter**, and where new ones may be required.
- Note **prevailing winds** and potential areas of shelter afforded by topography.

Vegetation and Habitats

Identify the different types and extent of **vegetation** cover in the environs of the site, e.g. pasture, woodland, heathland, etc. Protect existing hedgerows and banks, and note opportunities for extending existing vegetation patterns into, or around, the site to help mesh, or screen, the new development into its setting.

- Note locally occurring tree and shrub **species.** This will give clues to appropriate new planting.
- Note extent of existing wildlife **habitats** and any scope for their protection and extension.
- Contact the District Council to find out the location of any **statutory or local designations** such as Tree Preservation Orders or Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- Note maturity, and future **management proposals** for the landscape, e.g. burning of gorse encourages diversification of species, commercial forestry needs harvesting and possible replanting.

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Existing Features and Patterns

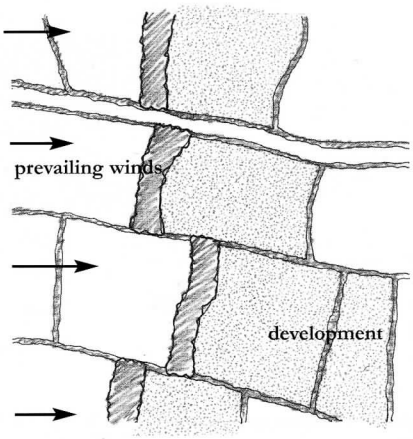
Existing patterns in the landscape should be noted, and new development designed to respect and respond to them positively. These may include:

- **Field patterns**, some of which are very ancient, should be retained and carried through into the new development.

- **Woodland** blocks and belts should be retained and, if necessary, reinforced to create a mature setting for new development that sits well in its landscape context. Avoid planting woodland belts and blocks in landscapes of a wild open character. Dispersed groups of trees may be more appropriate.

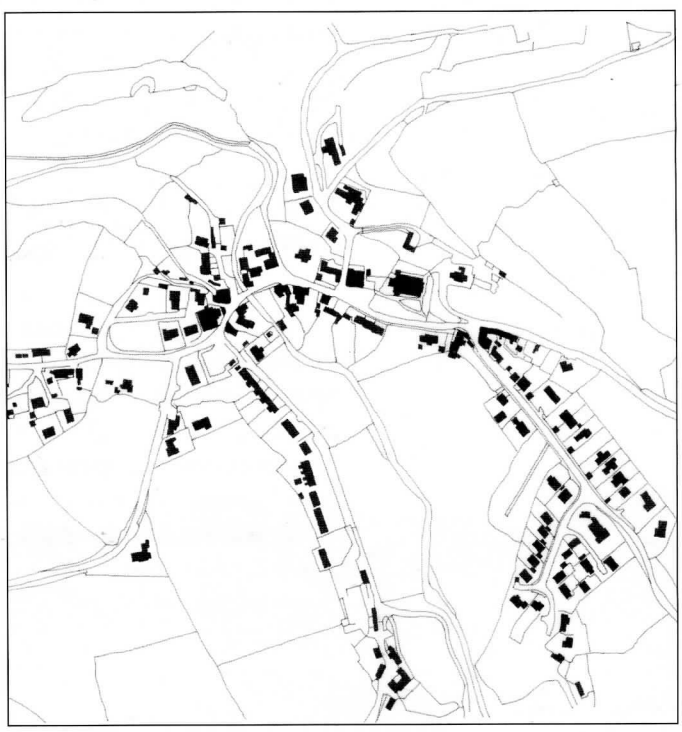
- **Nucleated, dispersed or linear settlements.** New development should suit the pattern of settlement of the locality. Upland areas are often characterised by small farmsteads and large scale development would not be an appropriate pattern. In lowland areas settlements often spread along valley bottoms or main routes.

- Some cherished **landmarks** and views are visible over a large area and new development should respond and respect their place in the landscape.



Retain and reinforce the existing field patterns within new development.

Linear Settlement Pattern



Nucleated Settlement Pattern

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS AND MITIGATION

- **Keep development below the skyline.** Where this is not possible plant belts or groups of native trees as appropriate, to soften the silhouettes of buildings.

- Use natural, or very subtle coloured materials. Avoid bright and harsh colours.

- Whenever possible consider off site planting to mitigate the effect of new development over distance. Several foreground clumps of trees at varying distances may be as effective as a single dense belt. This approach is generally more appropriate for open sweeping landscapes with limited tree cover.

- Test and refine layout plans and designs to attain high standards of development.

DEVELOPMENT EDGES

- **Edge of settlement treatment requires particular design attention.** Avoid exposed rear boundaries, and whenever possible extend existing landscape features, such as woodland and hedges into and around the site. Use locally occurring species, and walling patterns. Do not use Leylandii hedging or close boarded fencing on exposed boundaries.

- Style, density and scale of development must reflect surrounding settlement character. Scale is especially important in rural and coastal villages.

- Rear gardens should be well screened from public view i.e. boundary treatments should be 1.8metres high or taller, this allows garden sheds, washing, toys, greenhouses etc. to be hidden from view, and afford residents a degree of privacy from the public domain.

- If rear elevations are unavoidably exposed to view this must be taken into account in their design and choice of materials. Exposed plumbing pipework should be avoided. Permitted development rights may be removed to protect visual amenity.

- Study and emulate the character of traditional settlement edges in the area. Consider lower density or smaller scale houses, to minimise a harsh abrupt effect.

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- Avoid exposed close boarded timber fencing, Leylandii hedges or timber fence on top of traditional hedgebanks. Instead consider hedgebanks to match your local pattern, incorporating a hedge planted into the top. Remember that this will require a broader/wider hedge construction.

- Screen planting of belts or dense clumps of native trees and shrubs may be necessary in certain locations. These should preferably be planted prior to development. This may be a condition of planning consent. Trees grow surprisingly fast in the right conditions as the photographs below illustrate. Grants may be available to cover a proportion of the planting and maintenance costs, subject to certain conditions. See Appendix for further details. In addition to screening, native trees and shrubs create wildlife habitats and over time may become home to a variety of species of animals and plants.

Woodland planted in good agricultural soil after 4 years.

Woodland structure planting after 6 years.

Woodland planted in poor soil after 20 years.

EDGE 1

Avoid plumbing pipework exposed to view

Avoid washing exposed to view

Untidy effect of boundary fences

Avoid the untidy effect of garden sheds and greenhouses exposed to view

Hedgebank insufficient height to screen gardens

Trellis fence provides minimal privacy

EDGE 2

Use native tree species in hedgebanks

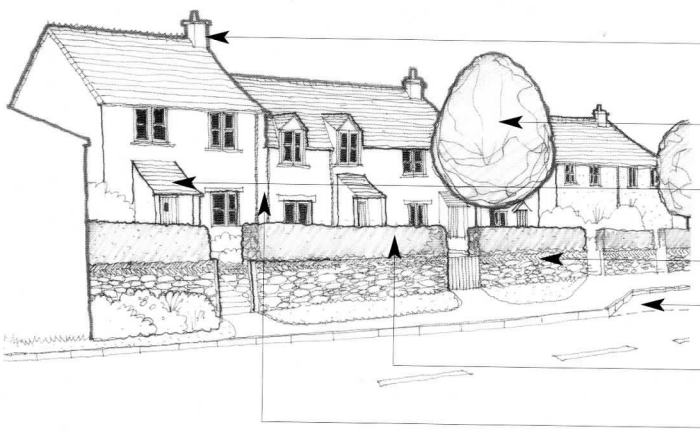
Rear gardens well screened from road

Hedge of native species found in the area

Hedgebanks of traditional pattern to suit locality - walls incorporating hedges and trees should be of sufficient width. (See Section E for details).

If it is unavoidable that gardens face onto the public domain, ensure that they are **well screened** in an appropriate manner for the location. The above example would be suitable for a village setting. A more formal solution would be necessary in a town. Walls may be most appropriate for fishing villages, where trees and hedges tend not to be features of the streetscape.

EDGE 3



Simple rooflines with chimneys to provide accents

Ornamental tree planting may be appropriate in some settings

Porches 'signal' front doors on elevation

Traditional hedgebank incorporating clipped hedge

Lay by provides visitor/on street parking

Appropriate boundary treatment defines the private domain

Simplify exposed pipework

Whenever possible **front houses onto the public domain**. If direct off-the-street vehicular access is not possible, garaging and parking may be sensitively designed into the rear of the scheme. Alternatively, on-street parking may be practicable.