

ARCADIAN DESIGN PRINCIPLE

THE WORDING BELOW IS AN EXTRACT FROM THE FOLLOWING ONLINE DESIGN STATEMENT

[Criteria for Layout at Densities Below 20 Dwellings Per Hectare | Essex Design Guide](#)

Arcadia, densities up to 8 houses per hectare (3 houses per acre)

In layout terms, Arcadia is the creation of the illusion of a rural environment. It draws on the 'picturesque' approach to landscape design typified by the layout of the parks of British country houses in the eighteenth century.

The guiding principle was the use of meandering walks which revealed successive surprise features hidden in a dominant landscape. In the same way, early 'leafy' suburbs of the nineteenth and early twentieth century conceal houses among mature trees so that the visitor is more aware of the landscape setting than of the houses themselves.

Today's Arcadia should strive for the same effect, with a layout devised to allow houses to appear at intervals among trees as surprise features in the landscape. This effect cannot be achieved at densities over 8 houses per hectare (3 houses per acre). Land economics may well dictate that housing at this density is at present the exception rather than the rule in new residential areas. If a Planning Authority wishes to see a wider use made of development laid out according to Arcadian principles, it would do well to consider a special notation for such sites in its Development Plan documents, so as to predetermine an appropriate land value.

As Arcadian layouts are dependent for their effect on a dominant landscape, the most suitable sites will be those which already have a significant density of mature trees and hedges. Consideration must also be given to how the existing tree cover can be enhanced by new planting or where, if existing vegetation is sparse, a new pattern of substantial tree and hedge cover can rapidly be established. The need for rapid establishment should not, however, influence a choice of plant material that is alien to naturally occurring species in Essex. Front gardens should be enclosed by hedges in order for the landscape to dominate the houses. Some design features – including open-plan front lawns that reveal cars parked on drives, built enclosures (such as walls with railings) and substantial gates – are not appropriate to the Arcadia layout.



Arcadian street scene