

# The Rousdon Estate – Planning and Design Brief

## 1.0 The need for a planning and design brief

1.1 The Allhallows Estate, Rousdon is a remarkably intact late 19th Century designed Estate, including the Grade II\* Mansion, Estate Buildings, Chapel, Lodges, walled garden, with some buildings and structures listed Grade II, gardens, drive and park. It was designated as a Conservation Area in 2000. The Undercliff is a National Nature Reserve and a Site of Special Scientific Interest, whilst the whole Estate is within the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



The entrance drive

1.2 The whole Estate has ceased to function as a School. As a result of this, the Estate and its buildings have been, and are continuing to be, subject to considerable change. Most of the existing houses have already been sold off for residential use. Architects were appointed to produce details for the conversion of some of the existing buildings to create residential properties, and the design for some new development which is currently underway.

1.3 There is a need to guide this change so that it is achieved in a sensitive manner, not only to ensure the protection of the Listed buildings and their setting, but to create an opportunity to enhance the appearance of the whole Estate by the removal of modern buildings, and reinstatement of original landscape features as well as ensuring appropriate long term management measures to protect and enhance the landscape and special nature conservation interest of the whole area.

## 2.0 A brief history of the estate

2.1 In 1870 Sir Henry Peek, MP for Wimbledon, who had been engaged in the tea trade since the end of the 18th Century, purchased the village of Rousdon. Firstly, he rebuilt the church and built the village school. He then commissioned Ernest George to design a Mansion and other buildings to take advantage of the superb position 152.4m/500 feet above the sea. Being some

distance from the nearest town, the house had to be self sufficient with laundry, coach houses, harness rooms, wine cellars, bowling alley, rifle range, china stores, bake houses, larders, museum, observatory, walled garden, tennis courts, farm buildings and numerous cottages to house the Estate population, which at the end of the 19th Century extended to about 600.

2.2 The architectural style of the Mansion and other buildings have been variously described as Franco-Flemish and Tudoresque in style, and are built mainly of flint rubble with freestone dressings, plain tiled roofs, ornamental timber work, with some tile hung work and redbrick.

2.3 The buildings are set within a fine late 19th Century designed landscape where there is evidence of the careful manipulation of space to give the illusion of great size, dramatic visual effects along avenues of trees towards the mansion, uninterrupted expansive views to the south, and a particularly fine walled garden.

### **3.0 Conservation Appraisal**

3.1 The following areas focus on, with an outline of the existing situation, conservation issues relating to change, and initial recommendations on the protection of the buildings and landscape through development control, and long term management of the Estate.

## **THE MANSION**

### **Architectural & Historic Character**

3.2 The Mansion was built on the grand scale in 1874 and designed by Sir Ernest George in an eclectic but unified mix of styles, in a Franco-Flemish style, and parts referred to as Tudoresque. The main buildings form a spreading composition, faced with local flint and purbeck stone dressings. Detailing includes sober mullioned windows, a sturdy Gothic porch, enlivened by irregularly grouped timbered and tiled hung gables, and there are plain tiled roofs. The dominant feature is the continental looking tower as a focal point to the group.

3.3 The plan form is grouped around two courtyards with the service courtyard approached by a tunnel and ramp. The main courtyard has a cloistered arcade.

3.4 Of particular interest in the interior is the strong nature theme in decoration, with floors depicting mosaics of fishes, walls with hand painted tiles of animal motifs, and glass cases with extensive bird collections. The latter have been judged to form an integral part of the fabric of the mansion and Listed Building Consent would therefore be required to move or remove them. Given their now relatively fragile state, their future care needs to be secured. Other features of

interest include the Medieval style Great Hall with its open timbered roof. There is a marble staircase, numerous ornate plaster ceilings, wall panelling, fittings and carved doors.

### **Conversion of the Mansion**

3.5 The Mansion is of particular architectural and historic importance, being Grade II\* on the List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest. Even a minor architectural intervention may seriously detract from the character of the Mansion, not only on the outside of the Mansion because of its carefully designed composition, but also on the inside with possible loss of the spatial integrity of the large rooms and circulation spaces by sub division, and removal of original fixtures and fittings, with the resultant loss of the architectural and historic character of the Mansion.

3.6 Of particular importance in the interior are the cloisters surrounding the courtyard, which should be left undivided together with fittings, particularly the bird cases. All schemes for conversion will include conditions relating to the future care of the birds and their casings. Where sub divided already the cloisters should be re-instated to the original open circulation space.

3.7 The Great Hall should be retained together with its fittings, the Library and various other rooms with particular spatial quality and ornate ceilings and carved timber fittings.

3.8 In general the rooms and circulation spaces on the ground and first floor are of the greatest architectural and historic importance and should be retained, avoiding interventions against their historic and architectural character, (apart from possible reinstatement.)

3.9 There may be more scope for sub division of other rooms both in the basement and attic, and in the servants wing but the alterations must respect what remains of internal features of architectural interest for example the tiles in the dairy.

3.10 The exterior, because of its carefully designed composition should generally be left unchanged, unless for the re-instatement of original architectural features, or removal of incongruous extensions.

3.11 A single user would probably be most satisfactory for retaining the historic and architectural character of the Mansion, subject of course to the suitability of the new use.

3.12 If the Mansion is sold off to several purchasers, then this will create more problems in retaining the special character of the interior, with the need for sub division, fire separation and introduction of new circulation spaces including staircases. There also may be the need to

create more entrances to the property, thus changing the external appearance of the building in an unacceptable manner. However subdivision of the service wing, if handled sensitively would be acceptable in principle.

3.13 Service access and car parking will need to be provided in a discrete location to the west of the Mansion, possibly in place of demolished outbuildings which are out of keeping with the Mansion. New areas for parking and garaging should be hidden within courtyards concealed by high walls. There is an existing service yard route accessed by ramp and tunnel within the basement area.

3.14 The open setting of the Mansion will need to be preserved. Any sub division of space to define the curtilage of ownership, and the intrusion of paraphernalia of external features such as washing lines, garden sheds and fencing would be inappropriate.

#### **4.0 Other buildings of architectural and historic interest**

##### **Architectural Character**



4.1 Other buildings forming part of the Estate designed by Sir Ernest George, although including a variety of different features resulting in a stimulating exuberance of forms, have an attractive unity created by a carefully controlled palate of materials, including flint, brick, plain tiles, hanging tiles, and timbering. These ancillary buildings are particularly attractively designed and of a high architectural quality. Pevsner, in his book 'Devon Buildings' states "he (Ernest George) is at his best in these small informal compositions."

4.2 The many buildings include the stable courtyard and other adjoining buildings which fully exploit George's picturesque skills, with the attractive and rather Germanic clock tower over the entrance to the courtyard.

4.3 Other Estate buildings of interest include Home Farm and the old Forge, which are a delightful composition designed around the traditional courtyard form.

4.4 There are three very fine Lodges to the east, west and north of the estate, which are plain tile hung with sweeping roofs and some oriel windows.

4.5 St Pancras Church was built in 1872 to replace the ruined Chapel of Combpyne Rousdon, with its pyramid roofed west tower and playful taller octagonal turret, forming a distinctive landmark on the Estate.

### **Conversion of Ancillary Buildings of Architectural and Historic Interest**

4.6 Because of the particularly attractive character of these ancillary buildings, which were designed as a unified whole as part of the Estate, it is considered that their original forms should be generally kept unaltered, apart from internal alterations to provide modern amenities. Care will need to be taken to ensure that any remaining internal features of interest are accommodated within the refurbishment schemes. The removal of more recent extensions which detract from their character, and the reinstatement of original features will be appropriate in refurbishment. New extensions will generally be considered inappropriate as will new openings, unless it is considered that these minor alterations will not detract from the character of the building but will generally enhance its appearance or are reinstatement.

4.7 Some of the buildings are listed Grade II and will need Listed Building Consent for even minor alterations. Other buildings may still need Listed Building Consent because they are within the curtilage of Listed buildings.

4.8 It is particularly important that, although the buildings will be sub divided and sold off, the original curtilage be retained, and spaces around the properties are not enclosed with fences and other sub divisions. In addition sheds and other paraphernalia related to residential use will need to be carefully designed and screened to harmonise with the existing planned landscape setting of the Estate. This would be likely to seriously detract from the appearance and setting of the buildings. The Council will explore the possibility of designating an Article 4 Directive to recover control over these elements.

4.9 Landscape planting will need to be carefully controlled to retain the rural character of the Estate, and avoid a suburban effect. Where there are existing courtyards and paved spaces it is important that where there is original paving and sets, these are retained and repaired. Where the courts have been tarmaced, as with Home Farm, then there may be the possibility of creating a more appropriate setting for the Estate buildings with the reuse of sets and traditional detailing.

4.10 Inappropriate parking in relation to the Estate buildings may seriously detract from their character. For example, it would be incongruous to provide parking within the courtyard to the stable block, and this should be provided in a new walled courtyard adjoining, which would harmonise with the existing boundary walls.

4.11 There may be the opportunity to provide some limited parking within the larger courtyard of Home Farm, together with a scheme for enhancing the paved area in the centre.

4.12 Careful consideration will need to be given to the provision of parking in unobtrusive locations for the Lodges.

## **5.0 The walled garden and environs**

### **Architectural and Landscape Character**

5.1 The large impressive walled kitchen garden is a particularly interesting feature, built in 1880 of stone with brick detailing, buttressed with attractive small pavilions to the south east and south west with plain tiled pyramid roofs. There are arched entrances to the gardens with hipped roofs to the east and west and attractive timber detailing.

5.2 The walled garden has been tarmaced, and most of the wall and adjoining buildings to the north were demolished some years ago. There is now an unattractive block work wall on the north side of it, together with a number of utilitarian buildings to the north and east.

### **Reinstatement**

5.3 It is considered that there is an opportunity to reinstate the walled garden, by removing the tarmac and reinstating an appropriate formal planting scheme. Also the rebuilding of the wall to the north together with comprehensive repairs of the whole structure, to complete the composition would be appropriate.

5.4 There were originally buildings outside the wall to the north east corner, and it would enhance the wall and its setting to insert an imaginative reinstatement of these buildings in the spirit of the extant Lodge to the north west corner of the garden.

## **6.0 Demolition and redevelopment of ancillary buildings**

### **Recent Development**

6.1 Although the attractive original buildings of the Allhallows Estate have remained remarkably intact, the main features which detract from the setting of these buildings are the many recent buildings constructed mainly for school use.

6.2 Particularly intrusive is the metal clad and brick building immediately to the west of the Mansion, the single storey huts including the old Fire Station and a brick building further to the west, all seriously detracting from the setting of the Mansion, old stables and St Pancras Church. (These have been removed since the time of writing)

6.3 The recently built sports hall, although some distance from the Mansion and partly concealed by trees, by virtue of its large scale and incongruous design is a major ugly landmark in the landscape and particularly detracts from the setting of Home Farm. (These have been removed since the time of writing)

6.4 Other buildings which detract from the character of the Estate are the flat roofed brick built block to the south east of the Mansion and new development next to the East and West Lodges. (These have been removed since the time of writing)

6.5 It would considerably enhance the setting of the whole Estate if the above buildings were demolished and the landscape reinstated.

## **7.0 The landscape character**

7.1 The landscape of Allhallows which survives to date is a remarkably intact late 19th Century designed Estate embracing the Mansions, Estate buildings, Chapel, Lodges, walled garden, gardens, drive and park.

7.2 A particularly interesting theme is the careful manipulation of space to create the impression of a landscape much greater in extent than it really is, for example the dog leg in the main approach drive to the Mansion. Also the creation of dramatic effects concealing the Mansion by blocks of planting until the building bursts into view. Controlled views are suddenly exposed to give expansive views to the sea and land to the west. The integration of quite distinct designed areas, including public parkland, the Estate Farm, private garden areas, the majestic walled garden and the distinctive avenues of trees lining the carriageways, and acting as screens to Home Farm, are features which warrant recognition.

7.3 Notice has been received from English Heritage that the garden is to be listed on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Interest in England, subject to the usual procedures.

## **Conservation and enhancement of the landscape**

7.4 The existing landscape, both as a setting to the historic buildings, and a major feature in its own right, is in need of protection against inappropriate change of open space, felling of trees, and inappropriate planting. Also to realise the opportunity to reinstate landscape features which have been lost, for example the walled garden, and the reinstatement of landscape following the demolition of inharmonious buildings. There is a need for the owner to employ consultants to produce an historic survey, restoration and management plan for the whole Estate, and an agreement to ensure its long term implementation.

## **Nature Conservation**

7.5 There are clear responsibilities for the Estate Owner in respect of the National Nature Reserve and the use/management of the "buffer zone" between it and the rest of the Estate. English Nature are seeking positive liaison on the future of this area.

7.6 Before any conversion or demolition works commence on site a survey to establish the existence of bats or owls must be undertaken and advice obtained from English Nature about appropriate timetabling to ensure minimum disruption to any species found.

## **8.0 New development on the estate**

### **Policy Background**

8.1 Development must accord with the relevant policies of both the adopted Devon Structure Plan First Review 1999, the "Development Plan" for the area, and the District Council's Revised Deposit Local Plan, (adopted for Development Control proposes in 2003).

8.2 These make it clear that unjustified residential development in the countryside will not be permitted. This stance is further reinforced by the national landscape designation which encompasses the Estate, it lies within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Further, the Undercliff is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest and a National Nature Reserve.

8.3 The Parkland surrounding the Mansion itself is mature with many mature and semi mature trees forming avenues and defining specific areas.

8.4 Whilst the Estate adjoins the small village of Rousdon, where there is a former primary school building and a garage (with shop), housing development within the Estate would be



regarded as unsustainable in that the majority of services cannot be obtained in the vicinity and thus travel is necessary to the nearest location of the relevant service.

8.5 The question of "enabling" development has been raised in connection with the future of the Estate, and is dealt with in detail in a recent policy statement by English Heritage entitled 'Enabling Development and the Conservation of Heritage Assets'. This refers to allowing new development to raise funds to pay for the restoration of, say, a Listed Building, in order to secure its future. However, in this case the Mansion itself is in relatively good structural and decorative order externally. It does not require substantial work to restore it and indeed the current applications deal exclusively with its conversion, making no reference to any need for restorative work.

8.6 Conversions of a substantial proportion of the existing buildings even without any new housing will result in the creation of a "settlement" around the Mansion of a different type to that created by a school. Car use could be substantially higher and servicing more intense. Some of the buildings currently proposed for conversion do not meet the terms of the policy criteria referred to above. Copies of the relevant policies are available from the District Council.

### **8.7 The Council's Objectives**

There are a number of objectives that the Council would wish to achieve, given the subdivision of ownership of the Estate and the loss of a single user of all the buildings. These are as follows:

The removal of all buildings within the Estate which detract from the character and appearance of either the Mansion, its important ancillary buildings, or its parkland and gardens.

The retention, intact, of the soon to be registered garden area secured from any damaging subdivision or features.

The reinstatement of the walled garden as a garden(s), fully enclosed.

An overall management plan for the whole Estate including nature conservation initiatives.

The retention of public access through the Estate.

Complementary facilities for the village of Rousdon and for any new residential users and dealing with the consequences of increased traffic in an around the estate.

### **Implementation of the Planning and Design Brief**

8.8 Some of these objectives can be met via legal agreements, (Section 106 Agreements) given their direct relationship to proposals already mooted by the new Estate Owner. Others may only be achieved in return for some re-development in certain locations on the Estate, although again this will need to be the subject of a legal agreement.

8.9 In the event that new development is considered to be warranted, it must be limited, given the breach of Development Plan policy involved and should be directly related to the existing buildings in such a way as to not detract from them. There are only two locations which may be appropriate for some modest redevelopment. This restriction is to ensure that intervention with new development is kept to a minimum to allow reinstatement of the landscape setting of most original buildings within the Estate.

8.10 Firstly, the development already mentioned, (see walled garden and environs) which would involve the imaginative reinstatement of old buildings which have previously been demolished just outside the kitchen garden to the north east. Style, form and materials will need to harmonise and match with the Lodge to the west.

8.11 Secondly, the site to the north of Home Farm and the Forge, which will replace the large scale sports hall, which currently seriously detracts from the setting of the whole Estate.

8.12 It is envisaged that the development would be of the courtyard form, tucked behind high stone walls separating the new houses from the historic buildings, including Forge and Home Farm. Also there would be high walls with small contained entrances along the main vehicular access, continuing the strong theme of boundary walls already established.

8.13 The houses would have their main orientation through the trees to the north west and south east of the site, with their facades facing onto the trees having an irregular form with a vertical emphasis, to help harmonise their shapes with the verticality of the trees.

8.14 It is appropriate that the design be "contextual" and imaginative but acknowledging tradition within the context of the historic character of the Allhallows Estate. The palate of materials should be generally limited to the materials found elsewhere on the Estate.

8.15 There should be special control on the external domestic paraphernalia such as garden sheds, fences, washing lines, planting and landscape.

8.16 Parking should be concealed within the courtyard form.

8.17 All permitted development rights for new dwellings and for the mansion house will be removed to ensure that the Local Planning Authority retains control over any small scale developments.

## **9.0 Infrastructure requirements**

**9.1 Water:** Given the remoteness of this site and the difficulties relating to water supply the Devon Fire and Rescue Service have advised that any new development should include the provision of domestic sprinkler systems and an extension of the present hydrant systems. No development should affect any existing legal water interests in the area and if any development on the estate involves water abstraction consent from the Environment Agency will be required.

**9.2 Education:** It will be necessary to seek payment from any developer towards additional educational infrastructure created by demand generated from both the conversions and any new development for residential purposes as Uplyme Primary School is already virtually at capacity. The Education Department of Devon County Council advise that this will be in the order of £600 per new residential unit. This will be secured via a Section 106 Agreement.

**9.3 Environment:** Any alterations in proposed foul drainage arrangements will need to be submitted for consideration and approval by the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency will also wish to ensure that no development affects the integrity of the site in any way and some form of environmental assessment may be required. Full details of surface water drainage arrangements will be required in any scheme for new development on the Estate.

## **10.0 Partnership**

10.1 It is important that any Estate owner/developer of this site works in partnership with East Devon District Council, English Heritage and the County Council's Coast and Countryside Service in order to secure the best possible scheme for the Listed Grade II\* Mansion, the other Listed buildings, the parkland setting and the Undercliff area.

Annex

ALLHALLOWS ROUSDON

Relevant Building Regulation Matters

1. Demolition of Existing Structure

Under Section 80 of the Building Act 1984 the developer is required to notify the Local Authority of any structures having a cubic capacity in excess of 1750 cubic feet which it is intended to demolish. Forms for notification can be provided and advice given in all aspects of this phase of the project.

## 2. Conversion of Existing Buildings

Applications under the Building Regulations will be required for the conversion of the existing buildings into domestic dwellings.

Close working relationship between architect, builder, Planning and Building Control Sections will be required so as to work within the confines of the listing. Special attention will be needed when dealing with the fire precautions and sound transmission requirements for the units of accommodation which are to be created.

## 3. New Buildings

The proposed housing development will require notification under the Building Regulations. An early response will be given to any submissions received and advice on means of achieving compliance with the Regulations may be sought at an early stage in design. Early consideration should be given to access and facilities for disabled persons, and access for fire tenders to the new dwellings.

Low energy designs together with the use of local and reclaimed materials should be considered. Help and advice from East Devon District Council Building Inspectors with local knowledge is available.

## General

Communication between the Local Authority Building Control Section and Devon County Council, Fire Officer, The Environment Agency and South West Water plc, may be used to advantage from an early stage in the design process.