

Cricket St Thomas Estate
Cricket St Thomas
Chard
Somerset
TA20 4DQ

London Lodge Farm
Holiday Lodges Proposal

Landscape Considerations



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WALDING ASSOCIATES ◦ **LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS**
30A High Street Newport Shropshire TF10 7AQ Telephone: 01952 825828 Facsimile: 01952 825517

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Cricket St Thomas Estate, Chard, Somerset TA20 4DQ

London Lodge Farm: Holiday Lodges Proposal

To be read in conjunction with Walding Associates Drawing Numbers:

- 272.02A Holiday Lodges: Landscape Layout Proposals
- 272.03 Holiday Lodges: Parkland Landscape Setting Proposals
- 272.04 Historic Map Regression

1.0 Historic Map Regression and Related Matters

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 An historic map regression exercise was undertaken to understand the historic background of the development site using Ordnance Survey sheets, generally at 1:2500 scale, starting with the 1st Edition map of 1887, which was used within the Sale Catalogue of 1895 with graphic additions to highlight the tree symbols. Further editions of the 1:2500 sheets reviewed are those dated 1903 and 1929 - 30 and 1963 - 77. In addition the 1:10,560 sheet of 1962 was also considered.

1.1.2 To ensure a uniform approach in assessing the various maps they have all been reproduced at 1:5000 scale and all woodland/copse canopies have been drawn in and all individual trees or tree groups have been drawn with a constant 20 m diameter canopy spread to enable a consistent comparison to be made between the various sheets.

1.1.3 These sheets clearly indicate change within the area of Cricket Park, as well as in the broader estate landscape.

1.2 1887 Ordnance Survey/1895 Sale Catalogue Map

1.2.1 The landscape evident on the 1st Edition map indicates a parkland that is very well treed with numerous copses and a multitude of individual parkland trees, tree groupings and clumps, which give a unifying character to the entire parkland area. Reference to photographs in the Sale Catalogue and within the Land Use Consultants report following the storm of 1987, confirm this characteristic.

1.2.2 What is immediately evident is the differing character of the shoulder area west south west of London Lodge. Although contained by the beech shelter belt which characterises Windwhistle Ridge, this area does not appear to be part of the parkland landscape being separated by a well treed boundary on the southeast side and with no apparent parkland tree presence.



1.2.3 This contrasts markedly with the shoulder area of the ridge further west in the vicinity of Knoll Hill and Grosvenor Lodge where parkland plantings characterise this upper area of the park.

1.2.4 On site it is immediately apparent that this area, unlike the area further west by Knoll Hill, is relatively level ground, unseen from within the parkland immediately to the south and southeast.

1.2.5 Progressing through the various sheets the following changes are seen:



1.3 1903 Ordnance Survey

1.3.1 This map shows a loss of vegetation on the forward projecting shoulder east of Rookery Plantation. The loss of the line of trees on the field boundary by the upper shoulder approaching London Lodge is notable, however, containment on the boundary by the western portion of this upper shoulder remains, defining this area as secondary and visually hidden/less significant when compared with areas on the upper shoulder further to the west. Here the more undulating landform provides views from Windwhistle Ridge, and to a lesser extent from White Down Lodge (formerly Grosvenor Lodge) down into the heart of the park by Cricket House.

1.3.2 The East upper shoulder is a relatively level area compared with the more undulating land by Swan Down Clump which introduces views into the valley below.

1.3.3 The 'burst view' which is said to characterise the entrance into the parkland as one passes through the belt of trees to the south west, beyond Lodge Wood, remains, although the loss of trees along the field boundary to the northwest diminishes this character.

1.3.4 Unlike the drive from White Down Lodge the London Drive is well graded and gives the most extensive approach to Cricket House, with an initial pleasing parkland setting building to a dramatic high-level view across the Purlington Brook towards Cricket House. This is followed by the circuitous route around the local valley by Rookery Plantation and Horse Park Copse which is characterised by the reservoir at its centre and thereafter by a gentler approach past the estate buildings and walled garden to arrive in the centre of the estate and at the house.

1.3.5 One could see this drive on the way in as one of increasing drama, creating anticipation and delight for the visitor. Conversely departing from Cricket House almost creates the same sequence with a pleasing sense of drama as one traverses the reservoir valley to be followed by a calming of the emotions as the higher park is entered, the lodge reached and one departs.

1.4 1929 -1930 Ordnance Survey

1.4.1 By 1929 - 30 the upper park beyond Rookery Plantation through to London Lodge is more open with further parkland trees and clumps apparently lost including the trees which had previously acted as a foil to the entrance into the parkland near London Lodge.

1.5 1962, and 1963 - 1967 Ordnance Survey

1.5.1 By 1962 the change in the upper Park area appears to suggest very much a secondary area with perfunctory tree belts of conifers now dividing the east upper shoulder into two. Furthermore, the development of London Lodge Farm within the widened carriage drive verge, which previously had gently presaged the entry into the Park, confirms this secondary quality.

1.5.2 Perhaps this is a reflection of the motorcar not requiring a gently graded drive. Certainly the need to reconstruct this drive by the Taylor family following the acquisition of the estate in 1967 would suggest its use had substantially declined to no more than a farm track.

1.5.3 The arrival of large numbers of visitors to the wildlife park required traffic management and as in earlier times this drive provided an excellent way to depart from the site in a dramatic and then calming way, although the London Lodge farm unit was somewhat of a surprise.

1.5.4 The secondary nature of this area is also confirmed by the more sympathetic extensions and amalgamations of copses and woodlands undertaken by Mrs Hall with the extension of Rookery Plantation, the linking of Admirals Seat Plantation and Horse Park Copse and the extension of Burs Lears Copse up to the drive. This all indicates a sense of the consolidation of a parkland setting around Cricket House with the outer areas as more distinctly farmed and visually separate environments of lesser importance.



1.6 The 1980s

1.6.1 With the introduction of the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens a sense of the totality of the historic landscape was recaptured. However, the registration appears to fail to include some elements of the estate which appear to be vital to the essence of the parkland, such as the significant beech shelter belt along Windwhistle Ridge and the field to the south west of White Down Lodge, which would give a greater sense of completeness to the setting.

1.6.2 The uniformity imposed by registration is generally a good thing encouraging the possibility of recapturing the lost character when further change is envisaged. However, landscape is dynamic, responding to change and change within the landscape relates to the economics of managing an estate to generate financial returns with which to maintain this landscape.

1.6.3 As such, the expansion of the dairy unit into an industrial scale operation at London Lodge was acceptable, although in visual terms the development could hardly be considered sympathetic.

1.7 1899 Ordnance Survey ¼ inch to a mile

1.7.1 In researching background information a further map has been seen which sheds useful light on the issue of the land west of London Lodge. As suggested by the regression exercise this land, though now seen as part of the parkland and included within the English Heritage listing, was, by reference to this map, clearly not part of Cricket Park, and its inclusion now within the park is the result of change and diminution in the value placed on this outer area of parkland during the second half of the C20th.

1.8 Late 1990s

1.8.1 The dynamics of the estate changed in the late 1990s with the sale of the house and the central portion of the park to Warner Holidays and the development of hotel buildings within the core of the estate. This provides income generation at the core of the estate to continue to maintain the house, outbuildings, gardens and wildlife park as an ongoing and important visitor attraction in this area of Somerset and the South West generally.

1.8.2 During this period the farming enterprise changed with the dairy use initially declining and has now ended.

1.8.3 The introduction of a new tourism based enterprise of the site of the dairy unit is simply a dynamic expression of changed agricultural circumstances in which tourism has become an increasingly important component of the rural economy.

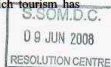
2.0 Development Discussion

2.1 Although the site for the proposed development is now within the English Heritage listed parkland, the historic precedent that the land which abuts the proposed Lodge development was not part of the parkland, remains relevant in recognizing the visual separation this area still largely retains from the remainder of the park, despite the loss of the boundary planting in the early C20th.

2.2 As such, the redevelopment of the dairy unit represents a significant opportunity to create a contextual landscape within the vicinity of London Lodge which broadly interprets and re-establishes the original sense of entry into Cricket Park, and redefines the sense of containment on the break of slope northwest of the London Drive with both retained existing and substantial new plantings.

2.3 In conjunction with this is the opportunity to re-establish visual continuity along this upper shoulder area by restructuring the eastern of the two perfunctory shelter belts. This is achieved with the removal of a substantial length of the eastern belt whilst incorporating the remnant with new planting to form a dogtooth shaped copse area, a shape which is characteristic of other plantings on the estate.

2.4 The westerly of these two shelter belts remains undisturbed being less visually intrusive and occupying more undulating land which lends its canopy outline a more sinuous and sympathetic character.



2.5 The dairy unit brought substantial change to this area with an increasingly extensive development of large agricultural buildings, together with silage clamps and hard standings. Redevelopment of the site for holiday lodges will, by comparison, use substantially less land for building, approximately 50%, with considerably less hard standings in the form of roads and parking spaces.

2.6 Similarly, the area given over to planting to set the dairy unit into its landscape setting was meagre, primarily a single line of cypresses on the southwest boundary which are somewhat alien to this setting. By comparison, the plantings which accompany the Lodge development are extensive and make a very real contribution to this landscape and will be particularly appreciated by the users of the Hotel and Wildlife Park who depart via this drive and who, in the past, may have found the approach to the dairy unit both confusing and inappropriate.

2.7 The layout of the lodges has sought to break the development up into separate areas with substantial tree and shrub understorey planting structuring this separation, whilst within each grouping the planting approach has been designed to provide a degree of enclosure for each lodge to maximise the sense of an enveloping 'sylvan setting'.

2.8 Along the south eastern boundary the importance of re-establishing a simple wooded character for the drive, with the woodland gradually diverging from the drive to recreate the sense of the 'burst view' is achieved with broad woodland planting on the north west and south east sides. These plantings extend out towards the new plantings which redefine the former north west park boundary, whilst on the south east side the planting are set upon gently modelled ground to accentuate the planting during initial establishment and also link it in with the making good work to Lodge Wood from the removal of the slurry lagoon.

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3.0 Planting

3.1 The planting approach generally for the Lodge development is to contain the lodges within a woodland or sylvan setting. However, the south west boundary does offer the opportunity to allow views out along the shoulder above the parkland. Planting along and beyond this boundary is characterised by expansion of the woodland belts emerging from the development or by appreciable clumps of woodland with native shrub understorey. These plantings provide a very soft edge to the development, setting it into the landscape so that the buildings gradually become unseen as plantings develop, whilst at the same time allowing both short and long vistas out into the landscape.

3.2 The planting approach will be of dense tree and shrub planting using a mix of native trees and both native and semi-ornamental shrubs within the development, but only native shrubs as understorey within the plantings which bound or are within the wider landscape setting.

3.3 Particular emphasis will be paid to re-establishing forest stature trees, especially beech, and this will be accompanied by pines as both a long-term canopy tree as well as a short-term nurse crop. Detailed planting proposals will be presented together with management objectives to achieve both short-term establishment and the long term wooded character

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 The careful organisation and siting of the proposed development and its planting will substantially transform this former dairy unit area and, together with the wider planting proposals, help to restructure the landscape of this newly important area of the estate.

4.2 As a location it has merit historically, being primarily not part of the historic park, and is capable of discreetly containing development. The extent of the development proposed is not large and by contrast is substantially less impactful than the previous dairy unit use with its accompanying 24-hour use including lighting and heavy vehicle movements.

4.3 Furthermore, the landscape proposals will progressively assimilate this new use sympathetically into this landscape such that over a relatively short period of time the main visual impact will be the resurgent character of the new plantings.

