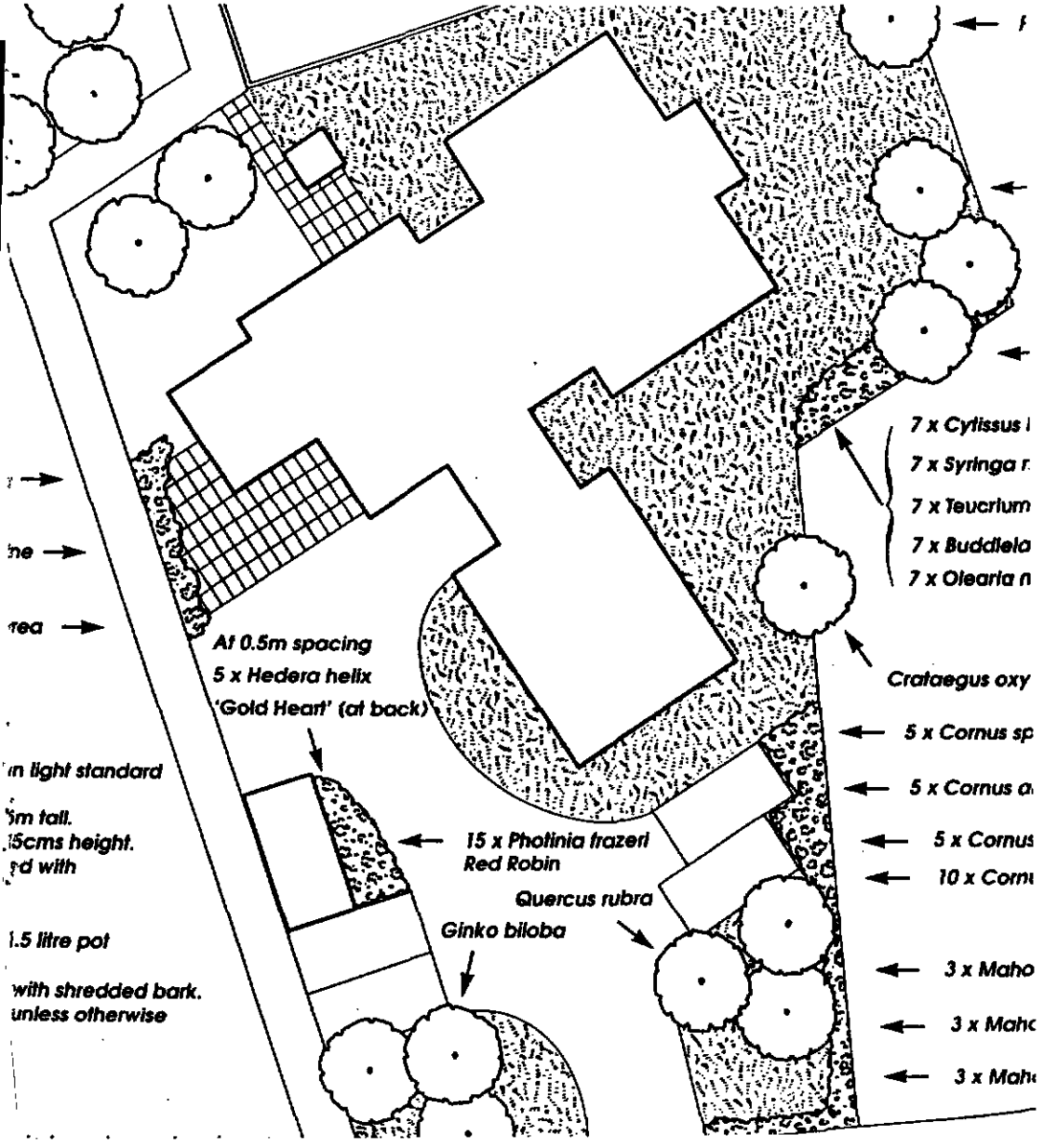
Landscape Specifications For Development Sites

Mid Suffolk DISTRICT

A general guide to the required standards for landscape schemes



REVISION 1

Attention is drawn to the British Standards Guide BS 5837 : 1991 "Trees in relation to construction," which will form the basis for negotiations over the retention of existing vegetation on Development Sites.

In particular, the construction of hard surfaces beneath the crowns of mature trees, and the erection of protective fencing about trees will be based on this document.

Licenced copies of the relevant pages are available from the Council upon request.

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The following notes are intended to provide a framework of guidelines which should enable developers to offer and carry out landscaping proposals at a level acceptable to this Authority.

Landscape Schemes

The following requirements should be met in order to satisfy a landscape condition on a planning permission:

Where a site is to be developed with an extensive scheme involving many houses, it is expected that the landscape plan will be professionally produced and will contain all the relevant information provided below.

Where development is relatively low key, involving perhaps only one or two houses, then a more amateur approach may be acceptable but this should still contain the following:

(a) An accurate scale plan of the site showing the position of all existing and proposed dwellings; existing trees; and other features including manholes, service runs, etc.

(b) A full schedule of works should be appended to the scheme demonstrating that pre and post planting works will be carried out and listing what these will be.

(c) The interpretation of the plans should not be left to this Authority. In this respect all plants being used on the scheme should be named, using botanical (Latin) names, showing both the species and the genera, e.g. *Cotoneaster dammeri* 'Skogholm' not 'Cotoneaster ground cover' or 'Skogs'.

(d) Use of containerised plants – this Authority expects that the majority of landscape schemes being proposed will take advantage of container grown plants in preference to those with bare roots. A list of the reasons for this are appended to these guidelines. Where a scheme includes a large proportion of bare root nursery stock, it will be

expected that a substantial post planting maintenance commitment will be demonstrated. Obviously some plants are acceptable as bare root stock, for instance Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Hazel, Willow and Poplar may all be successfully planted with bare roots.

(e) Plans should always contain the following information for technical interpretation:
   (i) Planting density (distance between plants).
   (ii) Size of plants being used.
   (iii) Planting materials such as mulch mats, stakes, canes, Gro-cones, and other materials intended to aid establishment.

(f) If a professional landscape architect is not being employed to create the scheme, the drawings submitted under planning permission condition should be clear, concise and well drawn in black ink. If the above points are not adequately covered in the submitted landscape proposals this may lead to extensive delays in the granting of detailed planning permission. The employment of a professional landscape architect is likely to pay for itself not least in the saving on valuable time.

Pre-planting

The landscaping of development sites is fraught with problems, many of which can and should be solved before planting takes place. It is expected that a submitted landscape proposal should show that measures are being taken to ensure that conditions will allow for the successful establishment of the plants being put in. The following operations should be undertaken where landscaping is involved with building development.

Subsoil compaction

This common cause of plant failure should be alleviated by the provision of a deep plough, or subsoiler, which will shatter compaction caused by mechanical activity during development. It is expected that a minimum depth of 60 cms would need to be treated in this way to allow drainage and aeration.

Topsoil

Where topsoil is to be imported/replaced on a site which has

been stripped of its topsoil during the course of development, it is expected that the replacement topsoil will be graded, freed from rubbish such as stones and building materials, and at least 15 cms in depth. Topsoil should be inspected by the Landscape Officer of Mid Suffolk District Council and its quality agreed before it is installed on site. Replacement topsoil should be free of contaminants such as weeds, fuel oils and chemicals. Where topsoil is brought from outside the site, the source of this material must be disclosed.

During Planting

The following guidelines should be adhered to during the planting works:

Bare root plants
The roots of all bare rooted plants should be kept covered at all times during the planting works. If left uncovered – even for a period of three minutes – the plant may be killed.

Standard trees
Where standard trees are being planted it is expected that these will not exceed 1.8 metres in height and will be container grown. These should be planted no deeper than the top level of the container, must be firmly staked to a low wooden stake not more than 30 cms above ground level and secured using one rubber tie. It is expected that all broken and damaged branches will be pruned back to a living bud.

Aids to establishment
There are several materials which have been shown in the past to greatly enhance the likelihood of successful establishment for the greatest proportion of plants in landscape schemes. These should be used on all schemes. Materials include plastic tubes (Gro-cones; Tuley-tubes) which should be placed on all trees of up to 90 cms in height. These tubes greatly improve the growth rates of the young trees and help to enhance development by acting as mini conservatories. Mulch mats, bitumen mats, and polythene mats are all types of ground mulch which should be used on all trees and shrubs where surrounded by grass areas. It has been shown that the use of these mats in keeping down the competition for moisture and nutrients from grass, can increase the growth rates of plants dramatically. Shrub beds should always be mulched with an organic material to a depth

of not less than 15 cms. Material may be peat, shredded bark, or brushwood chippings. These not only help to conserve soil moisture but eradicate the need for post planting weed control to a great extent.

Post-planting

Probably the most common cause of the disappointing performances of many landscape schemes is the complete lack of post-planting care. The following operations are essential for the successful establishment of any landscaping scheme and provision for these during a period of at least five seasons after the installation of a landscape scheme are regarded as essential.

Weed control
This should be undertaken at least twice yearly for the seasor after planting and may be chemical or cultural. It is especially important on shrub beds to ensure that couch grass and other pest vegetation is kept down. In addition, the bases of trees and shrubs which are grown in grass areas should always be kept clear for an area of at least a half a metre from the trunk of the tree. The use of mulch mats here greatly improves the chances of success and dramatically cuts down the cost of weed control after planting.

Watering
The most common way in which lack of after care causes the death of plants is neglect of watering for the summer season following planting. It is expected that at least five waterings per month will need to be undertaken during the June to August dry spell. Obviously in exceptionally wet summers this can be dispensed with and during exceptionally dry summers will have to be increased. It is expected that all landscape schemes will show provision for this form of aftercare.

Replacement of dead plants
If the above pre-planting, planting and post planting guide lines are adhered to, replacing plants during the two seasons following initiation of a scheme will probably be unneccessary. Normally, five to ten per cent of plants need replacement during the two years following planting, although by using container grown shrubs and increasing watering schedules this can be cut down to virtually zero.

Grass Seeding/Lawn Areas

The requirements necessary for the production of a satisfactory lawn space are fairly generally understood. The following guidelines may be of help and should be regarded as the minimum standard for compliance under a planning condition.

Grass seeding

Grass seeded areas will only be regarded as acceptable where the soil level has been cultivated to a miniumum depth of 15 cms, left even, well compressed and free from stones and other materials and raked to a fine tilth. The seed itself should have successfully germinated evenly over the entire soil surface, without patches. A minimum of 15 gms per metre square sowing rate will have been undertaken (dependent on the seed mixture) which should be indicated on the scheme. The soil surface must be left slightly proud of edging stones and other hard surfacing, to ensure that acceptable grass cutting can be undertaken. In the design stage, it will be expected that grass areas will avoid large obstacles or narrow corners which cause problems by restricting access with grass cutting machinery. Service access points, such as manholes, should not be left proud of the final soil level as this will cause constant and repeated damage to grass cutting machinery.

Turfing

Use of turf instead of grass seed provides an instant effect and may be seen as a more attractive alternative owing to the lower requirement for soil preparation. However, it will still be expected that soil is cultivated to a depth of 15 cms, levelled and firmed; stones and other material removed from the soil surface before turf is laid. Turf should be placed evenly over the site; edges should be knitted together; where cracks exist these should be filled with a mixture of good top soil and sand brushed in and levelled. No bumps, or dips should be left as this will prevent even grass cutting and result in 'scalping' of the grass. The quality of turf-grass depends almost entirely upon the nature of its source. It will therefore be required that the source of the turf be revealed to this authority upon request, or better still upon the landscaping schedule. This should indicate either the site of origin, the nature of the grass, or the supplier.

Conclusion

It will be expected that landscaping schemes will take into account surrounding vegetation, development and environmental site characteristics. This authority will not seek to dictate style or theme, but where the above criteria are not met a scheme may be deemed to be unacceptable.

Appendix

The use of container grown plants on landscape schemes for development sites is and should be standard practice, where it involves plants of 60-90cms, or more in height, for the following reasons:

(a) Container grown trees do not lose 90% of their roots upon lifting unlike bare root specimens – therefore establishment is much quicker and more certain. Using this type of tree significantly raises the chances of survival.

(b) The soil within a development area will inevitably have been compacted during construction, so ruining its structure – container soil allows a more friendly environment for young roots to develop in.

(c) Maintenance – particularly important during the first two years after planting, especially watering which hardly ever happens. Using containerised plants cuts down the need for constant watering as the soil is peat based and holds three times its own volume in moisture.

(d) Bare rooted trees lose 80-90% of their fibrous roots upon being lifted. The inevitable shock to the plant and the need to replace these roots, results in little or no growth to the crowns of surviving trees for a period of three to five years. Because container grown trees have not lost their fibrous root systems, no shock is sustained and crown growth can begin immediately.

(e) Although this may not always be a consideration the use of containerised trees greatly enlarges the planting season, so that apart from the high summer months they can be put in at any time from September to June.

In conclusion containerised trees usually grow longer, quicker, bigger, better and with less maintenance than bare root specimens.