

## 8.0 Locating Buildings

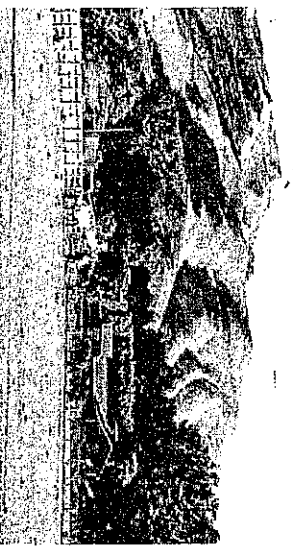
### Analysis

Buildings should be located to maximise the benefits of the rural setting while minimising their impact on that setting for others. Ideally this means siting buildings away from the sight and sound of the road, and sheltered from the wind.

Established rural buildings are generally settled into the landscape, by time or by design, with plantings that shelter and embrace them. New buildings need not be hidden but when visible they should be low profile and nestled into, rather than dominating, the site.

Reference to the traditional location of buildings in rural areas suggests that:

- Buildings are typically set back from roads and hidden from view by trees.
- Rural buildings are often set in trees or against hedges. This means that even if located on a low ridge it is the vegetation which is seen on the skyline rather than the geometric form of the building.
- Buildings are usually located up off the flats, which can be frosty and flood prone, and set on the lower slopes of hills, on river terraces, or on natural plateaus. In a setting of mature trees they are not generally visible.
- Buildings are generally grouped. With the exception of isolated barns, farm buildings tend to be clustered around the homestead.



*Rural buildings in the landscape*

### *Dispersed development*

In the past buildings in rural areas have been either dispersed on large lots, located at the functional centre of a farm as a group, or less commonly, grouped around community amenities to create a 'village' setting. Where lots are smaller isolation is difficult to achieve, and as buildings become more common they begin to increase in significance and change the open, undeveloped character of the rural landscape. Dispersal of new buildings across the rural landscape at relatively frequent and regular intervals will noticeably and irrevocably change the character of the landscape from rural to suburban.



Careful development planning which uses natural landscape features such as topography and vegetation to create screening may in some circumstances allow a sense of isolation and openness to be retained, even when buildings are relatively common and dispersed across the landscape. The challenge is to ensure that signs of habitation are not visually prominent.

### *Grouping buildings*

The characteristic and traditional pattern of aggregated buildings and intensive mixed plantings, set in relatively simple and undivided areas of open pasture, can be maintained by generally grouping new buildings or locating these in proximity to existing buildings. Features of the site such as topography and existing planting can be used as a basis for co-locating buildings in a way that privacy is maintained. Co-location may also enable shared access-ways to be considered, which would reduce the intrusion of multiple entrances along a rural road.



*Traditional patterns of building aggregation*

### *Minimising the visual effects of earthworks*

The location of potential building platforms should be considered early on in the site planning stage, and this is particularly important for steeply sloping sites. Locations that require major and highly visible earthworks for access and building platforms should be avoided.

### *Open space and visual privacy*

Choosing a rural lifestyle is usually about the prospect of space and privacy. Views out from a sheltered and private enclave onto areas of un-fragmented open space, bush or pasture are valued. Considering the scale and demarcation of spaces is important not only in terms of what the neighbours see, and don't see, but also in maintaining the openness that is characteristic of rural areas. This means keeping buildings back from the road, grouping buildings to avoid covering the landscape with structures, and using established vegetation as well as natural bumps and hollows to give visual separation and screening. The planting of solid groups and buffers of vegetation may be required to create real privacy. Any subdivision of open space should be moderated in order to maintain a sense of rural expansiveness.

### *Acoustic Privacy*

Acoustic privacy for the dwellings might be achieved by physical separation from other dwellings or the detailed design of the dwelling, its ancillary buildings and surrounding landscape features. The primary consideration is that people in or immediately adjacent to dwellings experience a sense of acoustic privacy, and the noise associated with their typical day to day activities does not effect their neighbours.

Maximising separation distances and dispersing new dwellings across a development site without detracting from rural character may be possible when lots are large and topography or other landscape features can be used to screen new buildings from view. Wide dispersal is usually only possible however when the development intensity is very low. Most sites in a rural environment do however offer the opportunity for separation distances that are many times in excess of those possible in urban situations.

When development is relatively intensive the scattering of dwellings for acoustic reasons is likely to compromise the rural character. In these circumstances detailed design measures such as the detailed placement and orientation of living spaces, acoustic barriers and screening elements, should be considered in order to enable some grouping of buildings.

## **Objectives**

- O1** To reinforce valued characteristic patterns of building placement.
- O2** To minimise the visual impact of buildings in an open rural environment.
- O3** To maintain the open, un-built character of important hilltops, ridgelines and spurs.



*Buildings placed to minimise impacts*

**O4** To ensure that development achieves the sense of space and privacy characteristic of rural areas.

**O5** To minimise ground disturbance in site development and access provisions.

**O6** To achieve reasonable acoustic privacy for dwellings.

**O7** To optimise energy efficiency in the placement of buildings on site

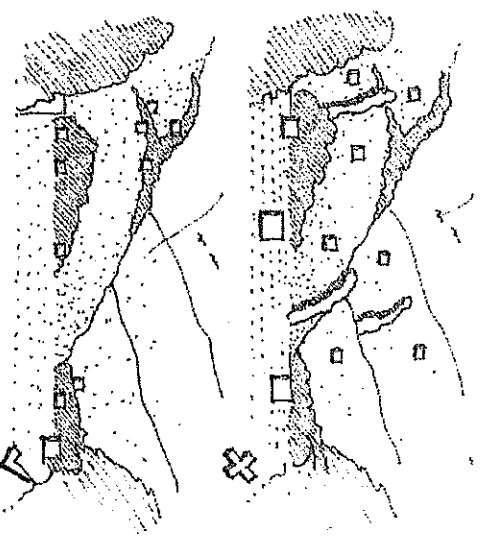


*Building location relative to ridgelines*

## Guidelines

**G1** Locate buildings to constrain their visual impacts using one or more of the following methods:

- Keep buildings off prominent hills, spurs and ridges, especially where they are seen against the sky.
- Use existing vegetation to screen, shelter, and convey a sense of maturity.
- Locate buildings to use valleys and ridges to screen them from each other and the road.
- Generally set buildings back from main roads and avoid manicured garden frontages along road verges.
- Group buildings to reflect traditional patterns and to maintain unobstructed openness on other parts of the development site.



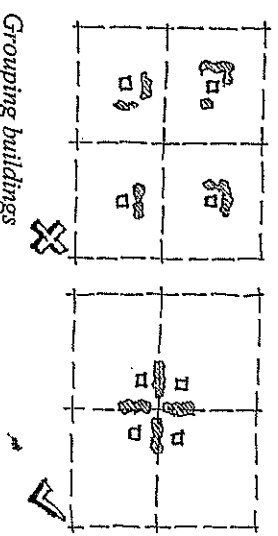
*Locating buildings to maintain characteristic openness*

**G3** When identifying house sites consider their relationship with those on adjoining lots.

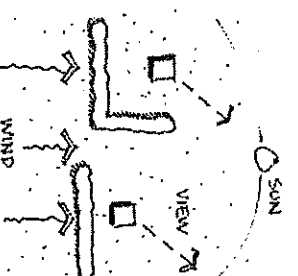
**G4** Locate buildings to minimise the visual impacts of any earthworks associated with access and building platforms.

**G5** Where acoustic privacy is likely to be of concern, consider:

- The use of topographical features, solid walls, ancillary buildings or a combination of these to provide acoustic screening. Such acoustic barriers will be most effective close to the source or the receiver of noise.
- Locating and orientating outdoor spaces directly associated with the living areas of dwellings away from similar areas on adjoining sites.
- Creating acoustic enclosures around stationary mechanical equipment.
- In combination with the above measures, using intensive planting to screen the source of noise and create the impression of acoustic privacy.



*Grouping buildings*



*Buildings screened for privacy and orientated for sun, views and a sense of openness*

**G6** Orientate main living and associated outdoor spaces to the sun and provide shelter from prevailing winds.

## 9.0 Design of Buildings and Structures

### Analysis

The sense of being rural derives as much from the character of the cultural dimension as it does from the natural. If buildings in prominent locations are large and have an overt urban or suburban residential appearance then the rural character will be lost, regardless of the 'naturalness' of the setting.

Some of the more important features of the character of rural buildings and structures include:

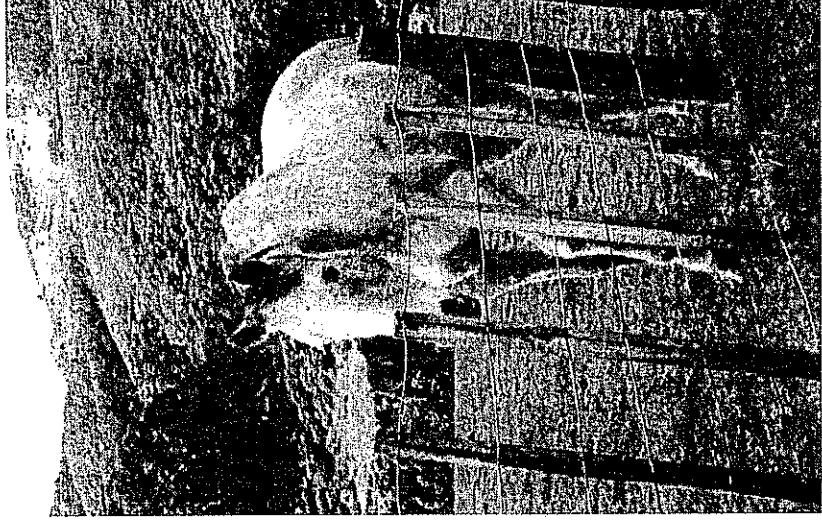
- Houses are generally single storey of a modest scale, of simple form, and are often timber framed and clad.
- Ancillary structures such as fences and gateways, sheds and barns are typically simple and visually restrained.
- Simple post, wire and batten fences are most commonly used.

### Objective

**O1** To ensure that new buildings and structures are in keeping with and do not visually dominate the natural and rural character.

### Guidelines

- G1** Maintain the characteristic modest scale of rural buildings and ancillary structures.
- G2** Where new buildings are in prominent locations, use visually recessive finishes and colours.
- G3** Choose roofs that are dark and absorb rather than reflect light.
- G4** Use fences and other features at boundaries that are simple and extend characteristic rural patterns
- G5** Place services underground where possible, otherwise use simple utilitarian timber poles.



*Typical rural 7-wire post and batten fence*