

Ruralise

Work in Progress

PechaKucha 

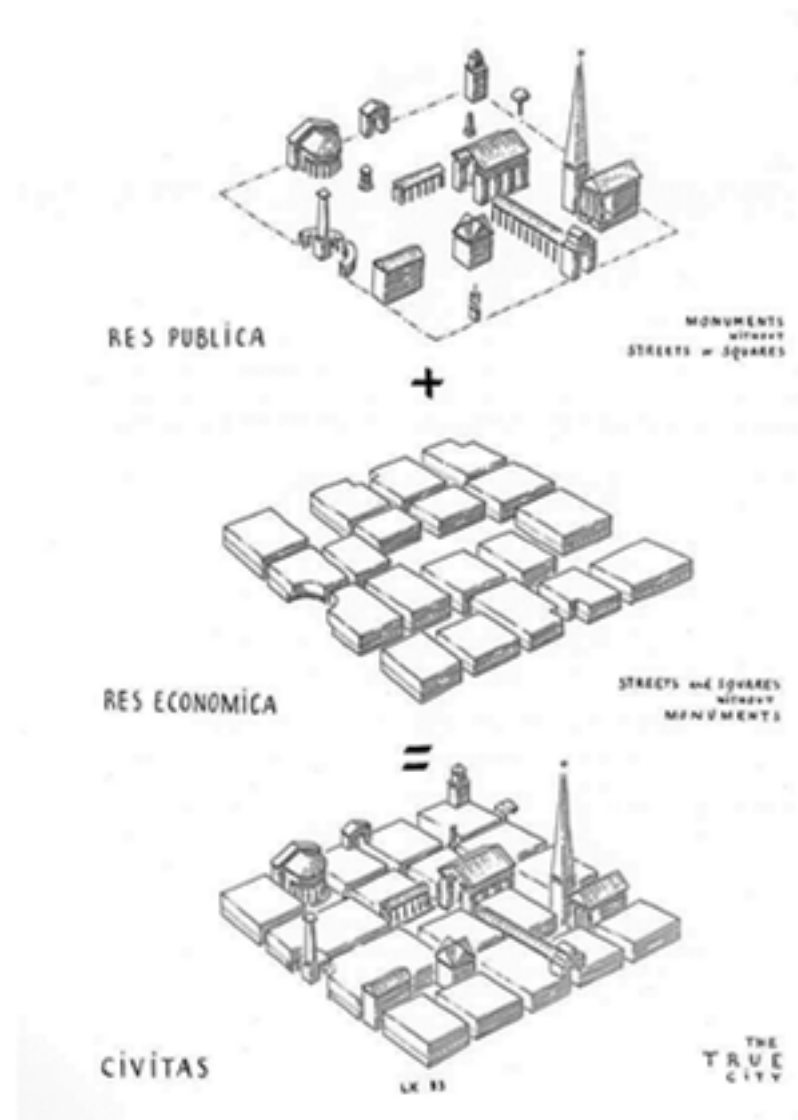


Over the last 50 or 60 years UK PP has made it hard to build in countryside
As a result perhaps we have lost our ability to do it well
Most of what we have built has been unimaginative and unsympathetic



Taylor and Green images by Click-Click Jim

Recent government policy (eg the CRTB) intends to make small-scale development in the countryside easier
If we are to build more then surely we must build better
Ruralise asks how that might be done. This presentation gives a flavour of what Ruralise is about.



A recurring theme in the blog is that of 'special' and 'normal' buildings. This seminal diagram from Leon Krier reminds us that both are important, that each needs the other. But as a profession I think we've become overly interested in the special...at the expense of the normal.



① ISOLATED DWELLING

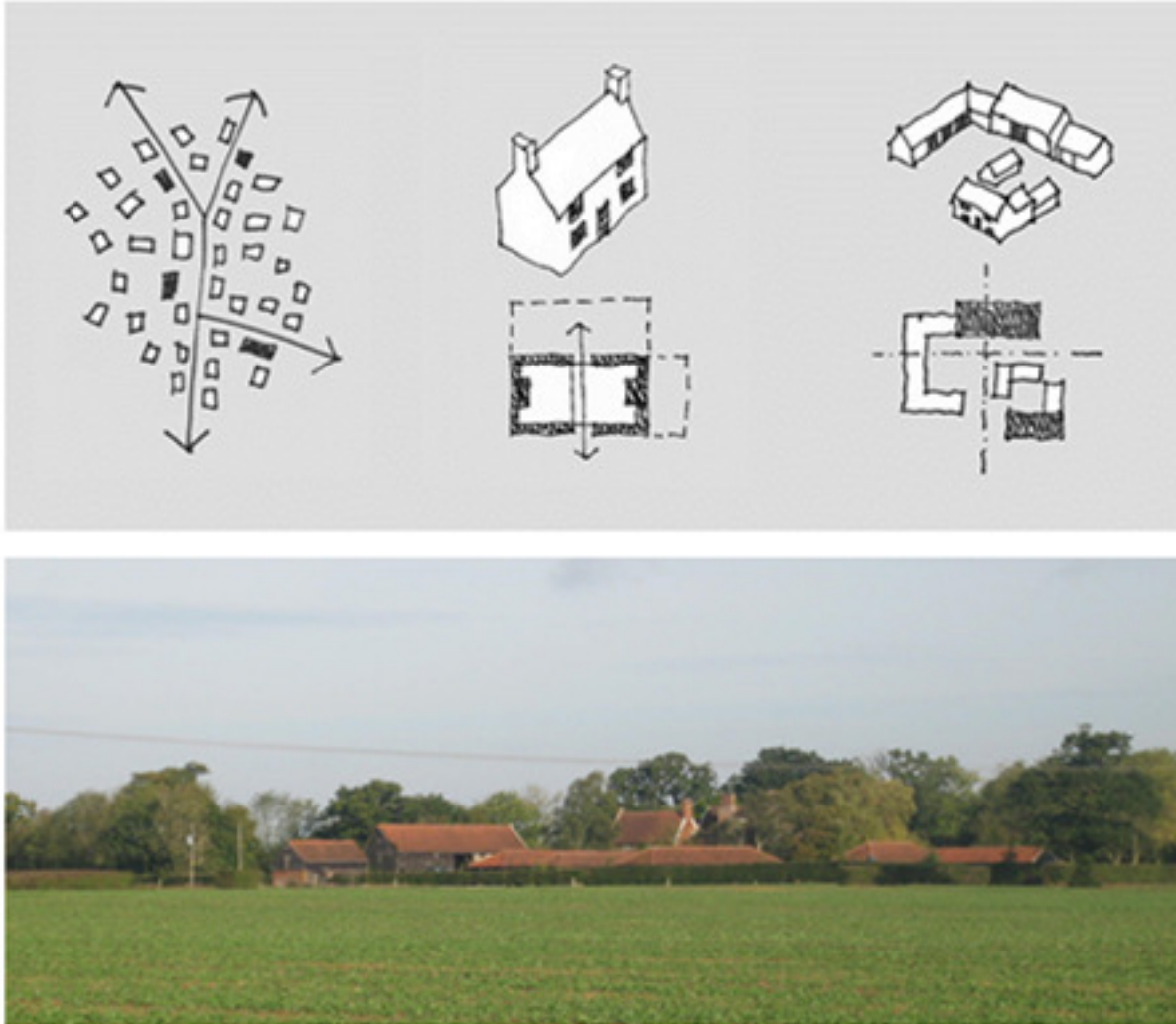


② INFILL DEVELOPMENT



③ URBAN EXTENSION

There's quite a bit on the blog about local distinctiveness and 'fitting in'.
It seems to me where a building forms part of a valued landscape or street-scene a sympathetic approach is reasonable, but should we really be benchmarking urban extensions or new settlements against mediaeval town centres?



As I started writing Ruralise I identified four archetypes or themes for a new rural architecture Norfolk's architectural DNA, if you will: villages, farmsteads, the wide-fronted house, roofs across fields. You'll hear more about each of these as I talk.



If there is such a thing as a prototypical Norfolk house this might be it.
Wide fronted, one room deep, for maximised sunlight and daylight.
Timber-framed, re-faced in brick. Extended to the rear, bringing the eaves almost down to the ground.



Another Norfolk house, showing the region's characteristic building materials.
Soft red brick and clay pan-tiles, some flint.
Colour-washed render is the big omission from this image.
Look carefully on the gable and you'll see the original steeper roof-line for thatch.



B&B



Arjen Reas



Kathryn Findlay

The consistently most-read post on Ruralise is called Thatch-Fest.
Great examples of ultra-modern use of an ultra-traditional material by B&B, Arjen Reas in the Netherlands
Kathryn Findlay calls this collision of old and new on her pool house 'Future-rustic'!



House-builders love to use traditional or regional materials to make their developments 'locally distinctive'. In one post I queried this use of weatherboarding on this development in Wymondham. In fact there's very little weatherboarding in this bit of south-Norfolk apart from a few black barns, and a handful of white water-mills



House-builders have a particular take on the 'village' aesthetic – wiggly roads, and fake old buildings – which is nothing like a real Norfolk village of course. But this is the 'normal' stuff that we have to improve on as a profession – if we get the chance.



Manor Close, Walberswick



Here's another group of essentially quite normal houses in Walberswick – but there's something more Norfolk-ish about them. The black weather-boarding is more appropriate, and I really like the big roofs swooping down to the entrances. Nice hedges. (Architect unknown; let me know if you know who it is!)



Crown Paddock, Needham Market
Pat Bellay

In some respects a rather similar scheme – by Pat Bellay in Needham Market.
I noticed these big roofs across fields from the train and detoured to investigate.
The three L-shaped courtyards connect to another of my themes – the farmstead



South Norfolk Design Guide



Atelier Pro/Lanpro

The Norfolk Residential Design Guide suggests how dense groups of buildings could be used to add variety into a residential layout. Atelier Pro proposed a series of super-scaled 'farmsteads' in their work for LanPro on proposals for the Norwich Research Park.

Langerak, The Netherlands. MacCreanor Lavington



More big roofs, on MacCreanor Lavington's Langerak project in the Netherlands. There's something farmstead-ish about it too. But notice how the layout is driven by narrow-fronted units all lined up to face south. That seems like a very urban concept to me.



Windmill Green, Ditchingham. Tayler and Green



As early as 1919 the Tudor Walters Committee was extolling the virtues of a wide-fronted unit with a through-living room, to give daylight ointo the living space, no matter what the orientation. Working in Norfolk in the 1950s Tayler and Green made extensive use of the wide-fronted house, because of these advantages.



Davy Place, Loddon. Tayler and Green

There's quite a bit on Ruralise about Tayler and Green. I admire their work for their enjoyment of the domestic, for their unfashionable interest in traditional materials and decoration – but most of all because they committed to Norfolk and produced a body of work that truly is regionally distinctive.



Dualchas Building Design

Rural Design



I've also written about the work of Dualchas and Rural Design. Both practices have committed to their bit of the countryside – Skye in this case. Dualchas have written in detail about how they've drawn inspiration from the local vernacular. But recent projects by Rural Design suggest they're getting a bit bored of designing 'normal' buildings !



Oxley Park, MK. Richard Rogers.

The Triangle, Swindon. Glen Howells.



I wrote one post about architects who bring a 'special' building mentality to the design of 'normal' buildings. But I think there is a shift in interest towards a more understated approach. I think we need to re-engage housing, not try to re-invent it from scratch.



So I'll give the last word to a very 'normal' little house. Again, I don't know who designed this. The big roof caught my attention, and the rather abstract blank wall above the first floor windows. There's no mistaking this is a modern house – it's not a fake old one – but it couldn't be more Norfolk if it tried.



So, there was a lot of ideas here, I hope it made some sort of sense – not least because at Lucas Hickman Smith we've just been instructed on a site in South Norfolk that should serve as a really good testing-bed for all this. Maybe I could tell you about this project in two years at FANN-13!