

# 4

## Materials

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# 4

## Materials - Dwellings



Typical timber-framed farmhouse

### Suffolk Traditions

4.0.1 The underlying geology of Suffolk is chalk, exposed to the surface at the north western extremity of the county, but covered with sand and crags to the east and by London clay to the south. Most of central and western Suffolk is overlaid with boulder clay and the visible landscape is the product of these different soil regions. The chalk was too soft to be of value as a building material but the clays not only provided a source of clay lump, render, bricks, and tiles but also supported the forests which covered much of Suffolk. These too, provided a ready source of building material.

4.0.2 To these were added flints and reed and straw thatching, and it is from this basic 'palette' of building material that the traditional 'Suffolk character' stems, as each material imposed its own limitations upon the builders of the time.

4.0.3 Thatch needed a roof pitch of between 45° and 55° and, because of the large eaves overhang, was an ideal covering for any clay lump building, a material which did not take kindly to constant drenching.

4.0.4 Timber framed buildings were governed to some extent by the length of readily available timber and the front to back depth of a timber framed house rarely exceeded 20 feet. By the late 17th Century, timber was becoming less readily available and brickwork was fast replacing it as a walling material.

4.0.5 Most brickyards produced red bricks but, toward the end of the 18th Century, changing fashions and the availability of clays to produce 'Gault' facings led to the many fine buildings boldly detailed in red and white contrasting brickwork.





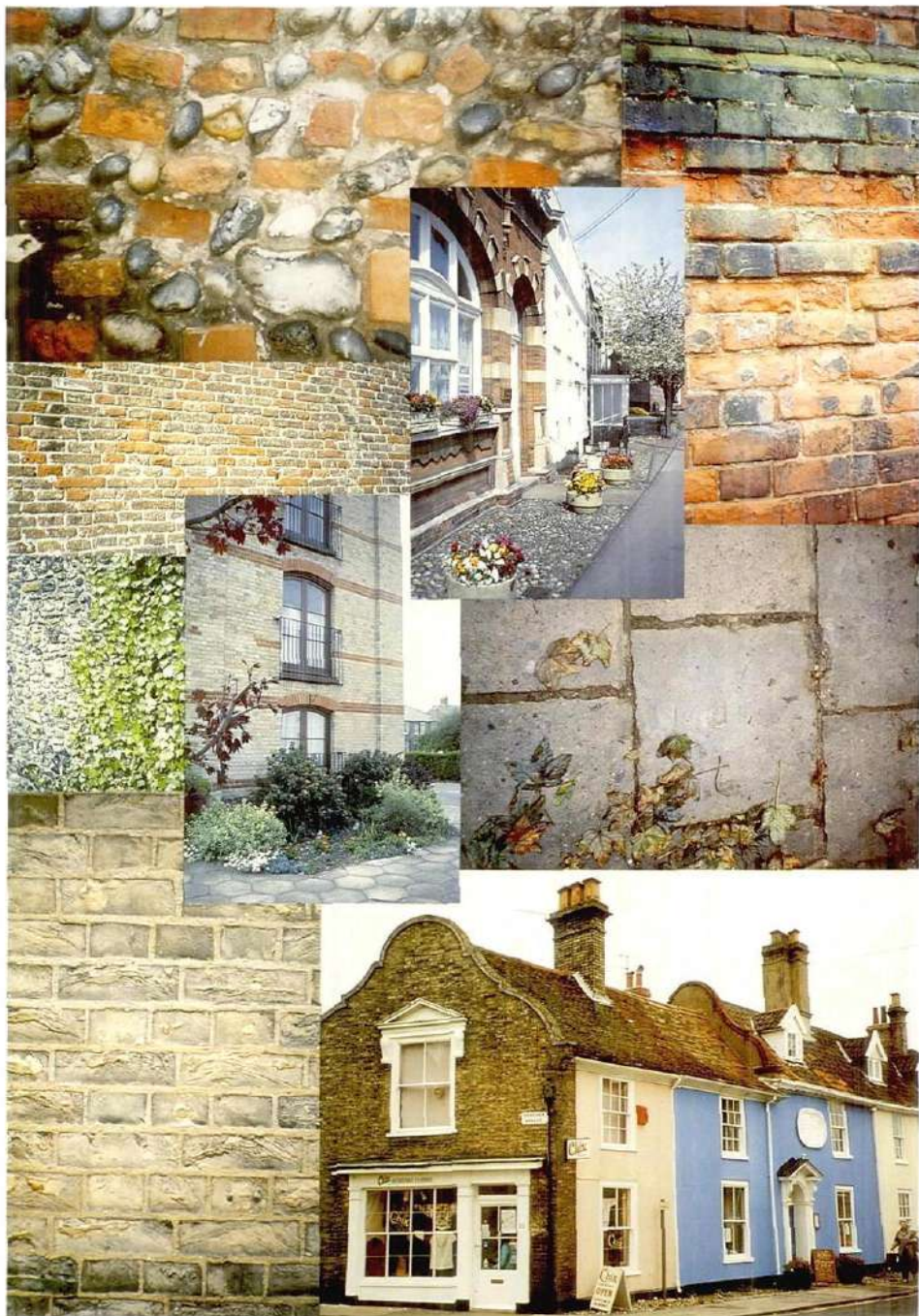
4.0.6 Slate was not indigenous to Suffolk but the construction of turnpikes and railways in the 18th and 19th Centuries allowed the import of what was to become a most popular roofing material. So widespread was its use that it may now be considered a typical Suffolk building material.

4.0.7 In order to perpetuate the unique character of the county and with a view to re-establishing local identity, developers will be encouraged to use external materials which are sympathetic in colour and texture to the Suffolk vernacular.

4.0.8 Avoid using materials which are uncharacteristic to the area, such as artificial stone, tilehanging and white lapped boarding. The following guidelines should generally be observed in selecting external materials for new housing designs based on traditional forms.

## Colour

4.1.1 Colour is most important, and materials should generally conform to the traditional orange/red, cream/white and grey/black ranges. Generally the material on the roof appears darker than the walls and this is accentuated by weathering. This relationship also has the satisfactory visual effect of tying the building into the landscape rather than associating with the skyline. For these reasons, it is strongly recommended that the traditional arrangement of roofs darker than walls should continue. A red brick house, for instance, with red roof tiles will, from the middle distance, simply lose its form and will appear a shapeless mass in the landscape.



## Walling

4.2.1 Use good quality facing bricks without coloured mortars. Avoid yellow/brown bricks and those with pronounced textured faces. Very accurate square cut bricks without imperfections, although easy to lay, produce an uncharacteristic mechanical finish lacking all charm.

4.2.2 Smooth faced rendering can be a good representation of traditional Suffolk plaster finished houses. Avoid rough-cast or pebble-dash. Aim generally for a neutral colour finish (white, ivory, cream or buff) to contrast with the orange/red or dark grey pantiles. Reserve strong colours, as highlights, for woodwork where they will give an attractive emphasis to the pattern of openings. A dark plinth, either in black brick or painted, will give a plastered house a firm looking base.

4.2.3 Tarred or black stained weather-boarding is a common Suffolk tradition for farm buildings. It can be used today in a variety of acceptable ways such as for the upper storey over a brick ground floor, or to clad a single storey lean-to addition. In particular, a separate garage in black boarded walls can reflect the tradition of timber framed out-buildings.

## Roofing

4.3.1 Black or orange clay pantiles and grey slates are predominant traditional Suffolk roofing materials and should be used wherever appropriate. Some inexpensive mass-produced substitutes may be acceptable depending on the context. Avoid using light coloured or brown tiles.

4.3.2 Black plastic gutters and rain water pipes are a perfectly acceptable substitute for the traditional metalware goods. Avoid light grey or brown colours, and shapes other than round, half round and ogee.

