Suffolk Coastal District Council

EASTSUFFOLK COUNCIL

On 1st April 2019, East Suffolk Council was created by parliamentary order, covering the former districts of Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council. The Local Government (Boundary Changes) Regulations 2018 (part 7) state that any plans, schemes, statements or strategies prepared by the predecessor council should be treated as if it had been prepared and, if so required, published by the successor council. Therefore this document applies to the part of the East Suffolk Council area formerly covered by the Suffolk Coastal District until such time that it is replaced.

The Suffolk Coastal Local Plan

Supplementary Planning Guidance

7

The Location and Design of Small Residential Developments

Following the reforms to the Planning system through the enactment of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 all Supplementary Planning Guidance's can only be kept for a maximum of three years. It is the District Council's intention to review each Supplementary Planning Guidance in this time and reproduce these publications as Supplementary Planning Documents which will support the policies to be found in the Local Development Framework which is to replace the existing Suffolk Coastal Local Plan First Alteration, February 2001.

Some Supplementary Planning Guidance dates back to the early 1990's and may no longer be appropriate as the site or issue may have been resolved so these documents will be phased out of the production and will not support the Local Development Framework. Those to be kept will be reviewed and republished in accordance with new guidelines for public consultation. A list of those to be kept can be found in the Suffolk Coastal Local Development Scheme December 2004.

Please be aware when reading this guidance that some of the Government organisations referred to no longer exist or do so under a different name. For example MAFF (Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) is no longer in operation but all responsibilities and duties are now dealt with by DEFRA (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs). Another example may be the DETR (Department of Environment, Transport and Regions) whose responsibilities are now dealt with in part by the DCLG (Department of Communities & Local Government).

If you have any questions or concerns about the status of this Supplementary Planning Guidance please contact a member of the Local Plan team who will be able to assist you in the first instance.

We thank you for your patience and understanding as we feel it inappropriate to reproduce each document with the up to date Government organisations name as they change.

FOREWORD

THIS PUBLICATION is one of a series of Supplementary Planning Guidance documents which are being produced by the Council to explain in more detail the aims and objectives of the Local Plan policies and how they will be applied and implemented in practice. In this case, number seven covers the location and design of small residential developments.

In order to fully understand and to make the most of this document the Council hopes that potential applicants, their agents and interested individuals will be able to devote time to reading every section. By doing so it is also felt that the reader is much more likely to find that they will be able to make regular use of it as a valuable source of reference.

Like all the Councils Supplementary Planning Guidance this document has been subject to appropriate consultation and has been adopted by way of a Council resolution.

The Draft of the guidance was considered by the Council's Planning Committee in October, 1993. They resolved to consult a number of local and national organisations representing both private and public interests. Following reconsideration of the Draft in the light of these responses, the Committee authorised its adoption and publication as Supplementary Planning Guidance, at its meeting in December, 1993.

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SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

The Suffolk Coastal area is renowned for the quality of its historic buildings, its attractive towns and villages, its landscapes, rivers and coastline and it is these qualities which make the area so attractive as a place for people to live, work and visit. It is very important, therefore, that these valuable assets are properly conserved because they are fundamental to the quality of life in the District and to its future economic prospects.

In order to ensure that the architectural and landscape character of the District is adequately preserved and enhanced, the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan contains policies which are aimed at not only protecting historic buildings and areas, important landscapes and open spaces, but also ensuring that where new development takes place, it is of an appropriately sympathetic design.

The quality of the design of new development and its effect upon the established character of the District, however, is made even more critical when considered in the light of a further principle objective of the Local Plan, which is to integrate most new development into District's existing settlements. In order to successfully achieve this the Plan requires that all new buildings should relate well to the scale and character of their surroundings.

In the recent past though, some new development that has taken place has not been of the quality that has positively contributed to the established character and appearance of the District's towns and villages. Consequently, many people see new development as a retrograde step which has to be objected to and fought against.

Change and new development can, however, provide scope for enhancement. With imagination, sensitive handling and a positive attitude by site owners, developers and designers, it should be possible to create attractive new developments on appropriate sites within an established, often traditional street scene, without them detracting from the area's existing qualities.

This Design Guide has been published to help designers produce good quality schemes for small residential development sites (i.e. those which would accommodate between one and five dwellings), most of which will be situated within the District's towns and villages. It's aim is to educate and inform whilst at the same time, leaving enough scope both for originality and for satisfying individual requirements.

It would be very difficult to produce a document which would comprehensively cover every development opportunity which may exist within the District's settlements. What has been produced, therefore, is a Guide which, whilst covering a great many of the design issues which have to be addressed, tends to concentrate more on those sites where developments will need to relate in a satisfactory way to the District's more traditional building forms and patterns.

SECTION 2 – HOW THIS GUIDE SHOULD BE USED

This Guide contains information which will assist with understanding and interpreting the Council's relevant adopted planning policies. It compliments the Suffolk Design Guide for estate scale residential development and forms part of a series of planning guidance publications which supplement the policies and proposals of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan.

The Guide should not be interpreted as a pattern book, dictating precisely what will be allowed in every situation. Nor should it be applied as a rigid policy document. The intention is for it to act as a starting point, to provoke informed discussion and to inspire a creative approach. In order to achieve this the document incorporates numerous illustrative examples. It should, however, be used with appropriate flexibility and sensitivity.

Assessing the quality and appropriateness of the design of a new development and whether its relationship with existing buildings and spaces around it is satisfactory, is not entirely a subjective exercise. The design issues which are discussed in this Guide should help to establish sensible criteria for assessing the appropriateness of proposals for small residential development sites throughout the District.

As such the Guide will be used as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications having regard to the advice in "Annexe A of Planning Policy Guidance Note No 1: General Policy and Principles" that:

> "Planning authorities should reject obviously poor designs which are out of scale or character with their surroundings. But aesthetic judgements are to some extent subjective and authorities should not impose their taste on applicants for planning permission simply because they believe it to be superior. Authorities should not seek to control the detailed design of buildings unless the sensitive character of the setting for the development justifies it."

In practice, therefore, whilst much of the general advice relating to universal elements such as scale, layouts, access, parking and landscaping may be relevant to most sites throughout the District, the more prescriptive guidance, particularly where a traditional approach to building forms and details is being encouraged, is likely to be most appropriate to locations where the context suggests a traditional design solution. This includes village locations, areas of high quality townscape and landscape, conservation areas, sites within the AONB and developments affecting the setting of listed buildings.

For advice on development proposals affecting modern estates and the more suburban areas of the District the Suffolk Design Guide also contains some useful information.

SECTION 3 – WHERE TO BUILD

Whilst the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan contains policies which generally allow new development to take place within the District's towns and villages, it also seeks to ensure that it is restricted to appropriate sites.

Local Plan Policies LP26 and LP27 outline the criteria against which the Council, as Local Planning Authority, will consider development proposals within the defined "Physical Limits Boundary" of Settlements. Policy LP28 ("Areas to be Protected from Development"), however, extends the criteria by indicating that it should not be assumed that all vacant or under used sites within the Boundary will automatically be considered appropriate for development.

This is because the attractive character and appearance of most of the area's towns and villages is derived just as much from the open spaces between buildings as it is from the quality of the buildings themselves. The Council is of the view that there is an urgent need to protect valuable open amenity space within built up areas in order to ensure the retention of the existing positive qualities of the District's established settlements.

This concern over "town cramming" is shared by Central Government. Planning Policy Guidance Note No. 3: "Housing" recognizes the important contribution that open spaces and undeveloped land make to the overall character of settlements and emphasises the fact that sensitive planning control is necessary to ensure that a balance is struck between the need for development and the interests of conservation:

> "Parks, playing fields, informal open spaces, allotments and private gardens can all be of great importance to the character of a neighbourhood .... Planning policies should, therefore, seek to achieve a reasonable balance between the need to make adequate provision for development and the need to protect open land from development." (Paragraph 27).

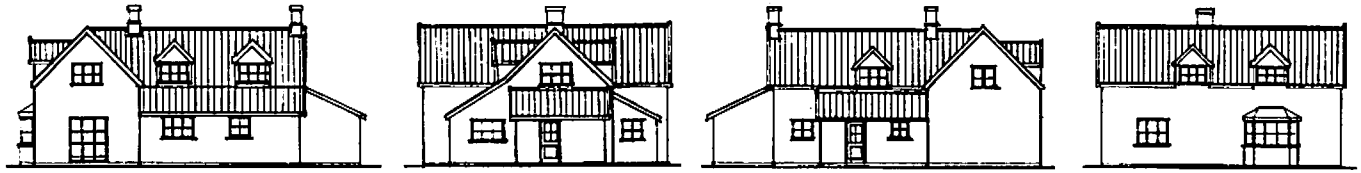
The Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Policy LP28 identifies some of the larger or more significant areas which should be protected from development (or further development) in the District. However, in the words of the Plan, there are "other gaps or open spaces which should also be protected but they are too numerous to identify individually".

In order to assist with their identification Section 7 provides a description of some of the more common examples. However, it must be stressed that as each site or open space has its own unique quality and characteristics it is impossible to compile an exhaustive list.

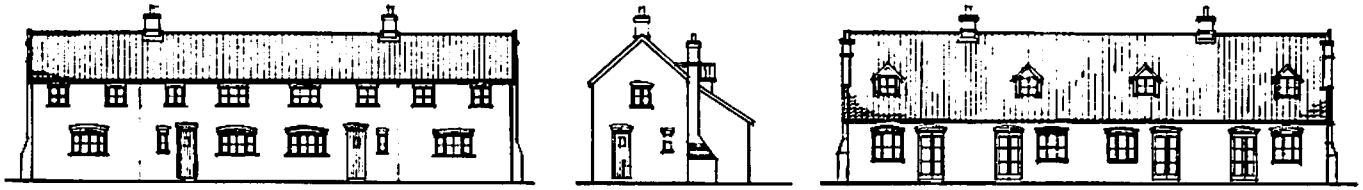
SECTION 4 – DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

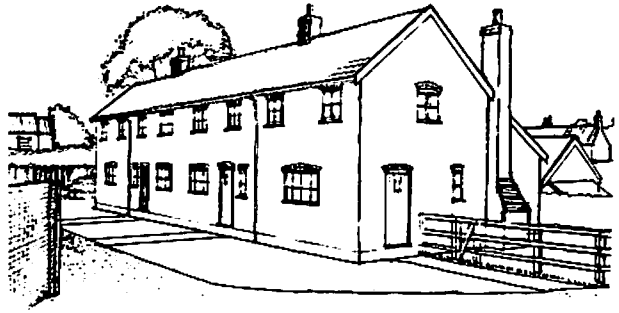
Context

New buildings should relate well to the scale and character of their surroundings:



– a detached cottage which relates well to its rural setting,





– a simple terrace which forms an attractive composition in a village location,

– a successful urban infill development.

4.1 CONTEXT

New development proposals should fit in with and relate in a satisfactory way to their surroundings. It is important, therefore, that a "contextual" approach is adopted, i.e. the character and appearance of the area surrounding a development site should always be a prime factor in determining the design of new buildings.

It involves designers, as a starting point, undertaking a study of the area within which a development site is located. An assessment should be made not only of its built forms and styles, use of materials and types of detailing, but also the character of the spaces between buildings, the form and appearance of the street scene and the landscape and topography generally.

If it is found that the area has little, or a varied townscape quality, then the Council will expect the form and design of new proposals to create a fresh composition and point of interest. In this way a positive improvement should be achieved in the standard of the built environment locally. Poor quality development around a site should not be seen as an excuse for compounding the situation by producing proposals for new buildings which are also poorly designed.

In areas of high quality townscape, such as those parts of the District's towns and villages which retain their traditional character, and especially those which been afforded conservation area status, an appropriately sympathetic standard of design will be required.

In order to adequately achieve this in such areas, designers of new buildings should ensure that they acquaint themselves with, and develop a basic understanding of, not only the area's vernacular tradition, but also its Georgian and Victorian buildings. By being able to reflect what gives the area its particular character and identity, new buildings will be far more likely to form a logical and sympathetic extension to that which already exists.

A well designed modern building which relates well to its context can form an improvement even in an area which retains its traditional character. Each site and its context, however, will be unique. Within this Guide, therefore, any attempt to illustrate good modern design without adequately portraying its surroundings would risk making the illustrated design appear arbitrary and subjective. It is for this reason that the design solutions illustrated in this Guide clearly reflect traditional qualities rather than modern, innovative approaches.

This does not mean that the Council is only going to accept designs which are pastiches of traditional buildings. Indeed appropriately designed and sympathetic contemporary architecture will be encouraged wherever possible.

SECTION 4 – DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Townscape

Attractive traditional townscapes – rural (above) and urban (below).

Examples of some modern townscapes – monotonous layouts (above) or the arbitrary use of building forms, materials and details (below).

4.2 TOWNSCAPE

One of the most pleasing characteristics of the established towns and villages in the District is the juxtaposition of traditional buildings, out-buildings, walls, trees and hedges all combining together to form and enclose pleasant and attractive spaces of varying types and character.

In the more attractive traditional townscapes, (including the villages), buildings tend to be either physically linked to one another or where there are gaps, walls, trees, mature hedges and other vegetation provide visual links. In many streets, therefore, it is difficult to appreciate where one property ends and the next begins and although each building may vary in detail or have been built at different times the overall effect is of one coherent unit.

Historically, in town and village centres, many traditional buildings were built directly onto street frontages. Sometimes a terrace or a house was built at right angles to the street on a narrow plot, the gardens being screened by walls or hedges. Occasionally there was a farm or workshop complex built close to the street frontage, with barns and outbuildings forming a tight courtyard. When larger houses were constructed these were sometimes set back in sizable grounds behind a high wall or hedgerow.

Many recent developments have lacked this visual unity. Individual houses and their plots, even when the buildings themselves are similar, still read as single entities, physically and visually separated from one another and from the rest of the established street scene. Open plan front gardens with driveways and turning areas, together with the arbitrary use of different finishes and details, make this lack of cohesion even worse.

It is very often this lack of townscape quality which makes the public so resistant to new developments. Paragraph 4 of Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: "Housing" emphasises this point by stating that:

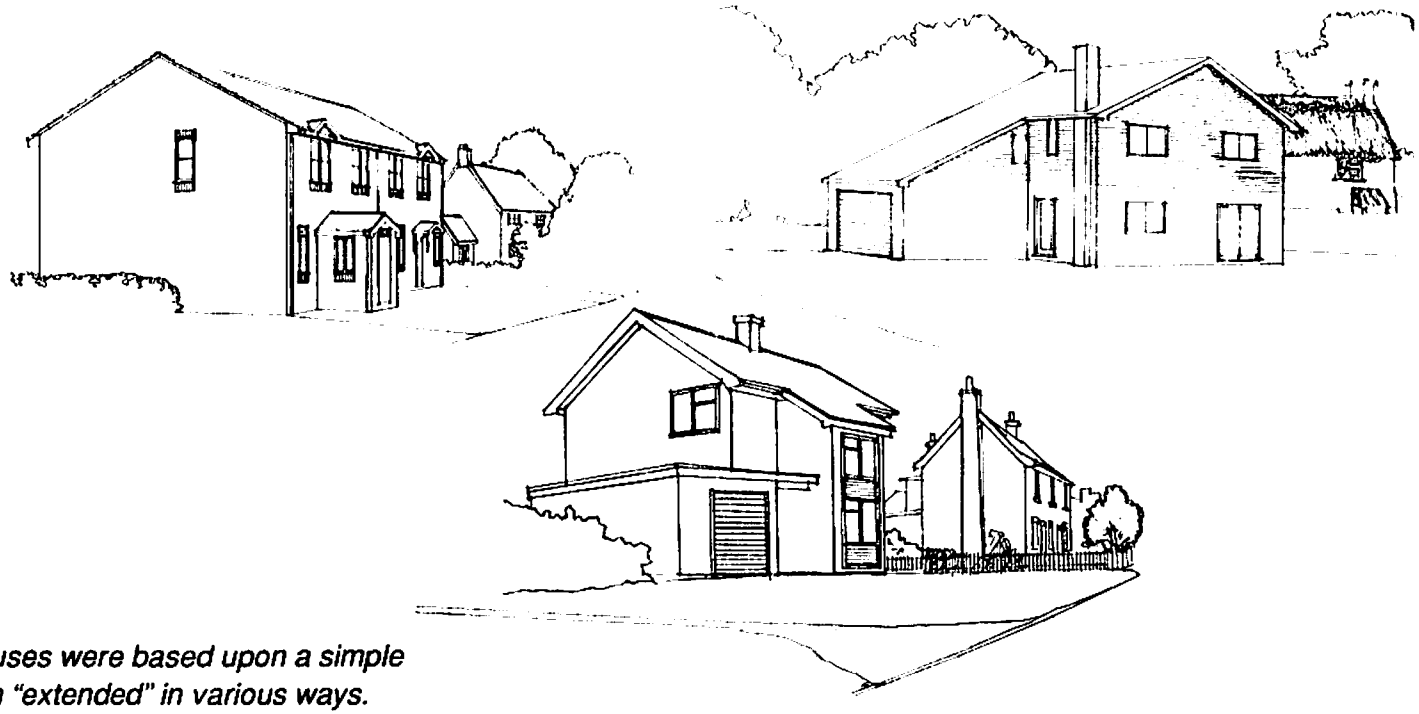
> "Developers and designers should aim for a high quality of design and landscaping in all new housing developments. well designed scheme that respects the local environment can do much to make new housing more acceptable to the local community."

In considering new development proposals, therefore, the Council will positively encourage design solutions which respect and enhance the attractive townscape qualities of the District.

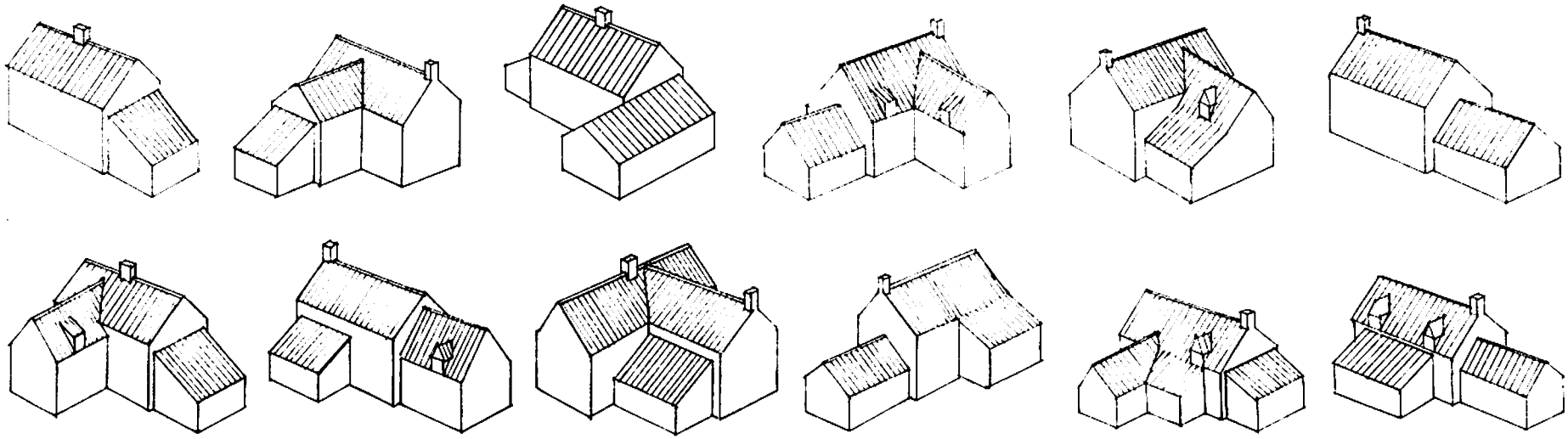
SECTION 4 – DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Form

Right: The attractive appearance of many traditional buildings can be spoilt by new houses with a non-traditional form being built alongside them.



Below: Traditional vernacular houses were based upon a simple rectangular form which was often "extended" in various ways.



4.3 FORM

One of the main reasons why many of the Districts towns and villages retain their attractive character and appearance is because visually, it is the traditional vernacular building form which continues to dominate the street scene.

The traditional vernacular house forms of the area were determined by the constructional techniques that were used to build them. They were usually a single room depth, restricted by the lengths of available timbers. They occurred as single buildings, semi-detached cottages, linked groups and terraces. They invariably had steeply pitched roofs and narrow gables.

Their basic simple, narrow, rectangular form was often 'extended' but it still remained the dominant element in the composition. Attached were smaller, 'additive' forms such as lean-to extensions with mono-pitched roofs or smaller and lower pitched roof elements to the side or at the rear. In this way a sometimes quite large, often irregular plan was covered by a series of separate pitched roof forms all linked together. This achieved not only visual unity but also helped to reduce the apparent size, scale and bulk of the building. It should be realised however, that a significant feature of these buildings is the fact that the amount of accommodation provided on upper floors is inevitably relatively small.

The form of many new buildings (i.e. their shape and arrangement of component parts) is often very different. Many modern houses and bungalows for example, tend to have a rectangular plan which is close to a square. This plan shape is then covered by a single pitched roof which, in order to keep the height of the building down, is often fairly shallow. These overtly 'suburban' forms are not only alien to the established vocabulary which is associated with the areas vernacular buildings but also fail to match the "Classical" proportions of most Georgian and Victorian houses.

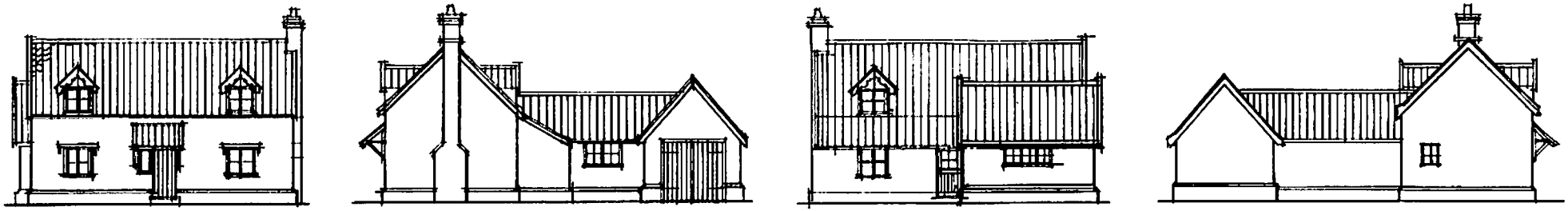
In an attempt to overcome these fundamental problems, many new houses are often "dressed up" in vernacular or "Classical" details and materials. However, no matter how well executed, neither the use of traditional materials nor details will adequately compensate for a building which has an inappropriate form.

Cost and the desire to build as cheaply as possible are often the primary reasons behind the visual problems associated with modern house forms. It is basically cheaper to build a square box. The Council will, therefore, whilst taking into account as appropriate, factors such as building costs, energy conservation and maintenance implications, resist new developments which are clearly insensitive to the environmental qualities of the locality.

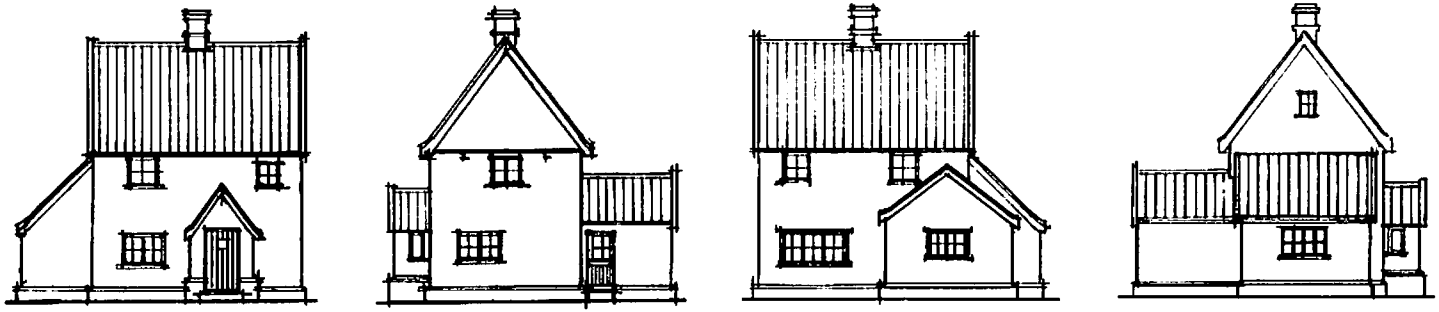
Furthermore, in the more sensitive locations within the District the Council will positively seek to encourage proposals which will reinforce the area's more traditional building forms and patterns. In order to assist with this process the next few pages illustrate examples of house designs whose arrangement of built forms tends to reflect the traditional architectural character of the District (see also pages 14, 24 to 29 inclusive and page 34).

SECTION 4 – DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

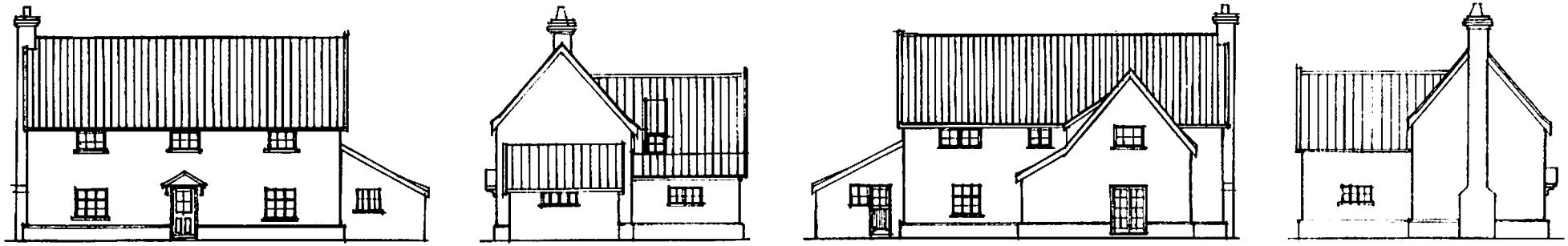
Examples of building forms which reflect the traditional architectural character of the District:



1. A 1½ storey cottage with a typical vernacular form, incorporating a rear lean-to (or "outshot") and single storey range linked to a garage.

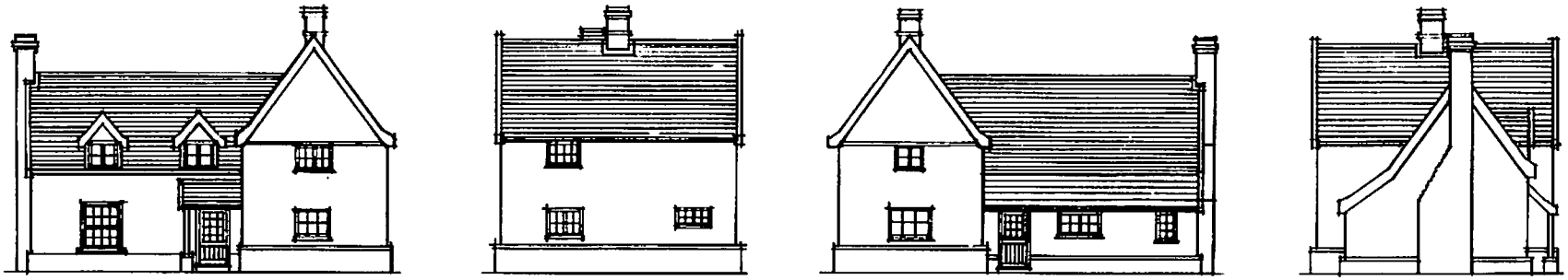


2. A small two storey house comprising a simple rectangular form with single storey lean-to and pitched roof extensions to the side and rear.

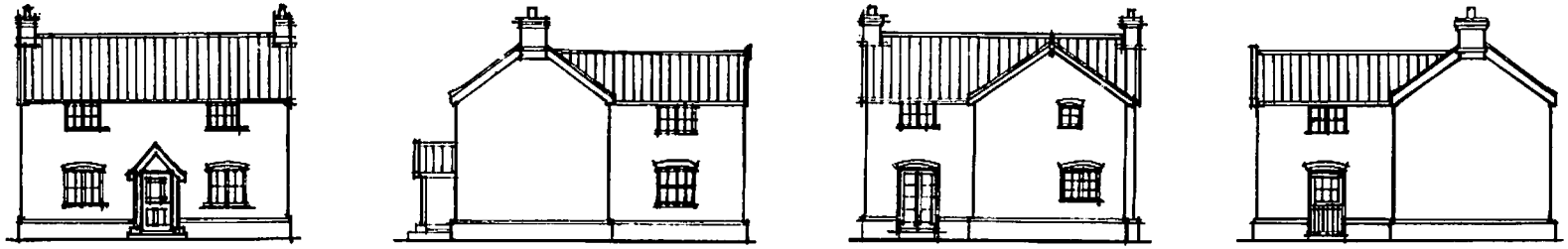


3. A two storey house with a form and proportions which reflect a traditional Suffolk timber framed building.

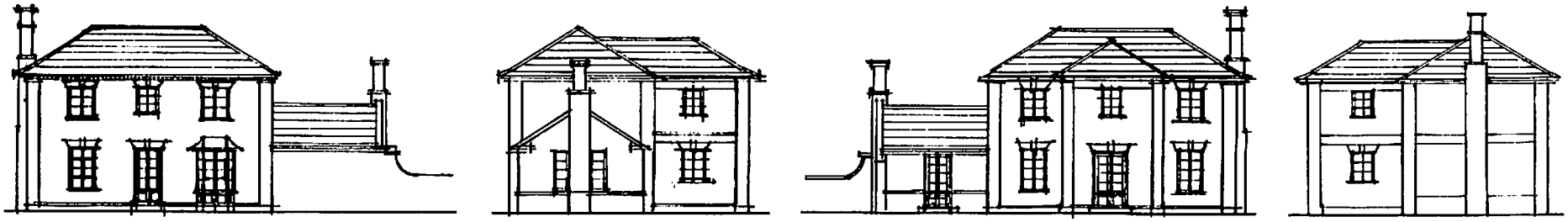
4.3 FORM



4. A 1½ storey house with a two storey side wing set at right angles in the traditional manner.

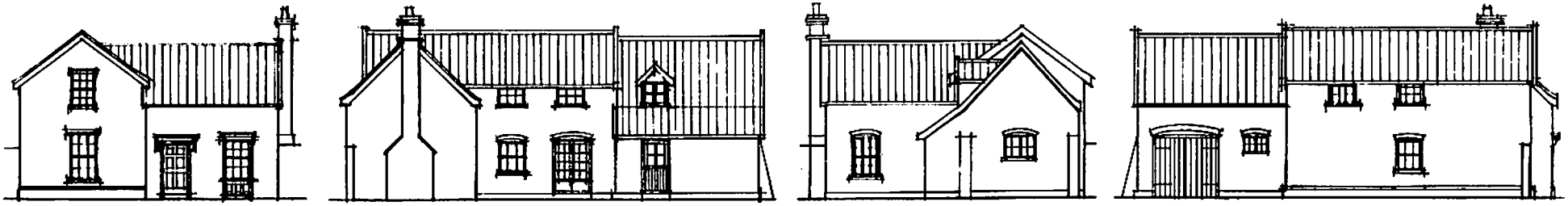


5. A typical two storey 'Suffolk' brick built cottage with rear extension.

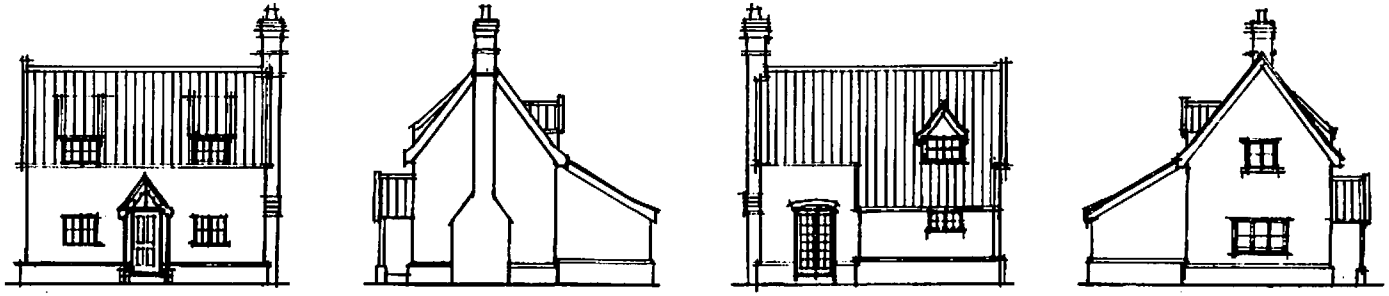


6. A two storey dwelling of classical proportions, reflecting the late Georgian, early Victorian building styles of the area.

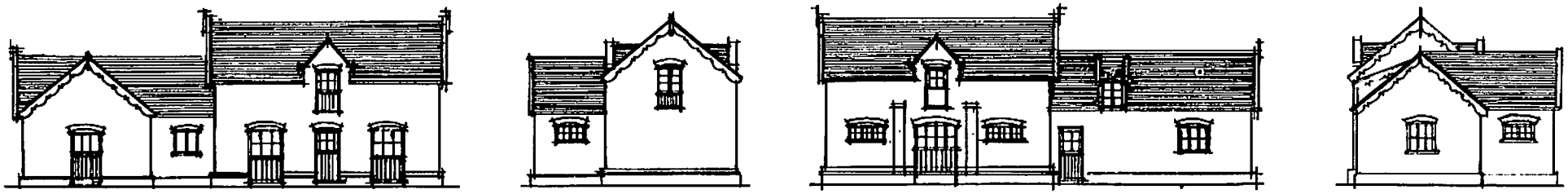
Examples of building forms which reflect the traditional architectural character of the District (continued):



7. An arrangement of simple, traditional, narrow span built forms. Linked together they create a dwelling which provides a sizeable floor area whilst not appearing to be too large or bulky.

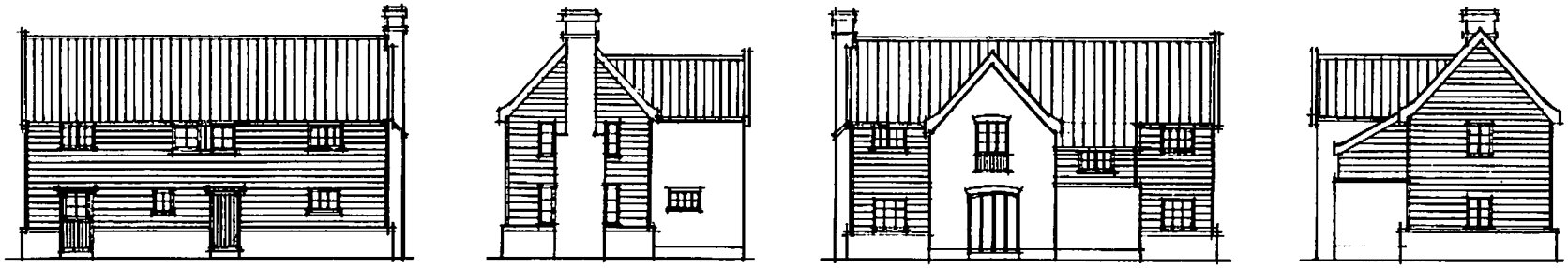


8. Another small 1½ storey cottage of a typical local vernacular built form and style.

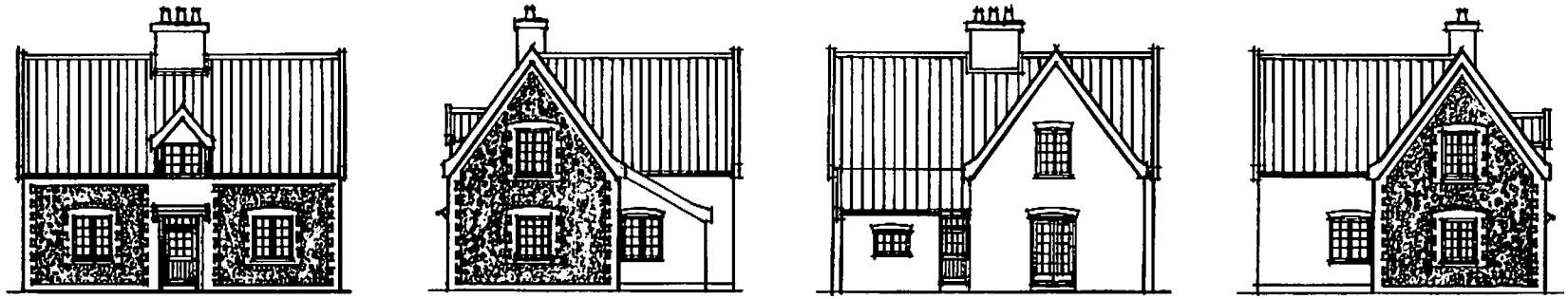


9. This dwelling reflects the form and character of many of the areas smaller, traditional, 19th Century brick and flint faced structures.

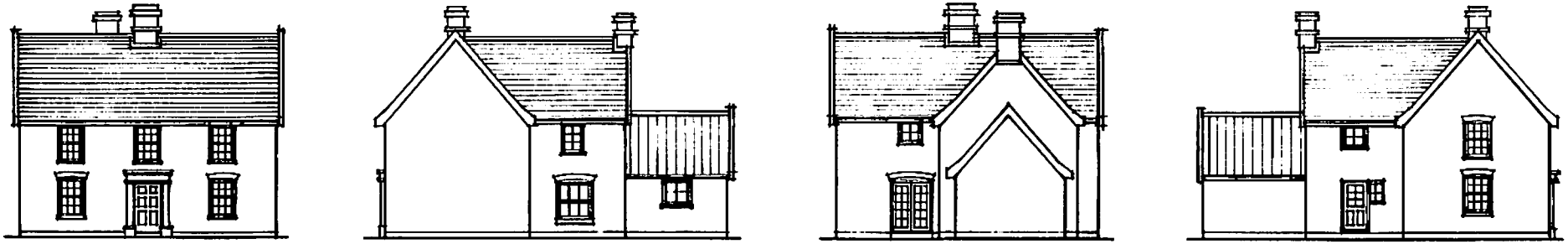
4.3 FORM



10. A two storey timber-clad house with a traditional, slightly lower, rear extension and lean-to staircase enclosure.



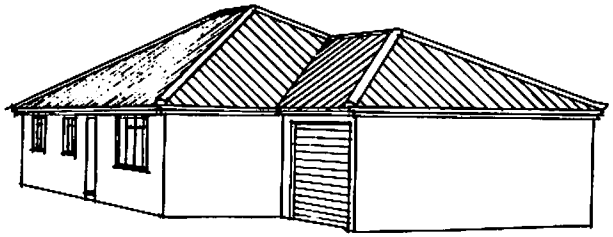
11. A relatively tall flint faced dwelling with a steeply pitched roof reflecting the style and proportions of some of the area's Victorian cottages.

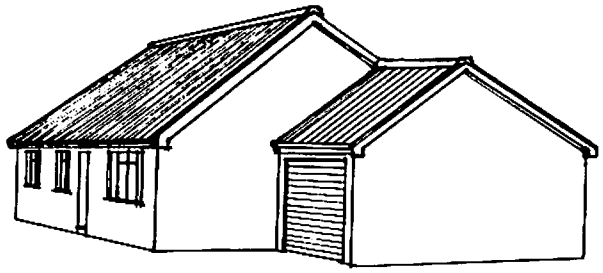


12. The symmetrical facade and classic proportions of this two storey dwelling reflects the character of many of the areas 18th and 19th Century brick houses.

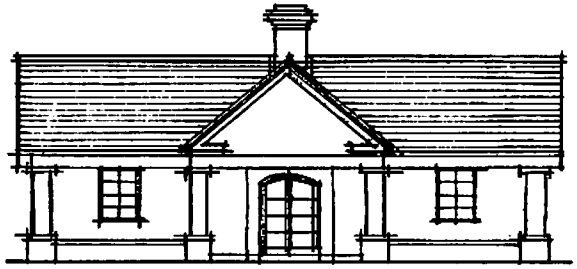
SECTION 4 – DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

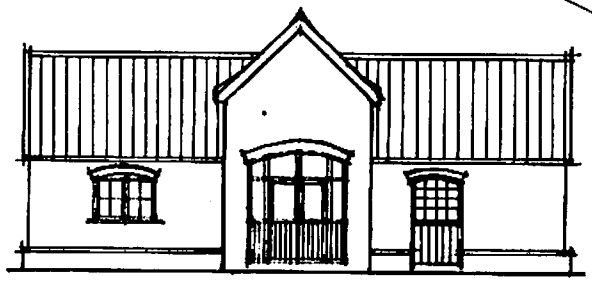
Single-storey dwellings

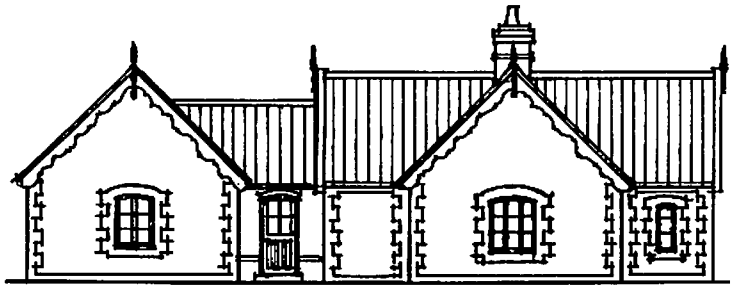


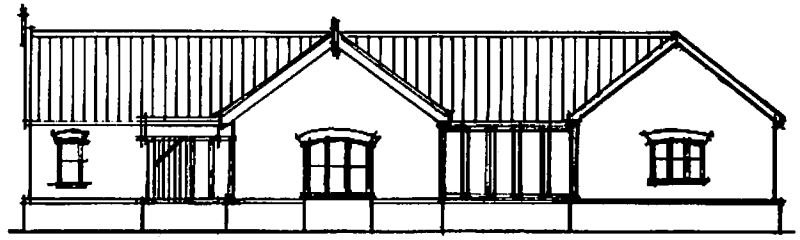


Modern bungalows, such as those illustrated above, have a non-traditional form and character and as a result will not be suitable for those parts of the District which retain their traditional appearance. If appropriately designed however, single-storey dwellings will be acceptable in most locations (see below) and sometimes quite a large dwelling (right) can be achieved by linking together a series of traditional forms.









4.4 SINGLE-STOREY DWELLINGS

Despite the fact that throughout Suffolk Coastal there were, over the centuries, a great many single storey timber framed and brick built farm and industrial buildings constructed which have survived to the present day, there is surprisingly hardly any surviving evidence of a tradition for single storey dwellings. Virtually all the old vernacular houses and cottages which still survive in the District, although often originally very small structures, do in fact provide some form of accommodation at an upper floor level.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, a small number of single storey dwellings were constructed as "gate houses" for the numerous large country houses which were erected during the period. The design of most of these small residential units reflected the Neo-Classical or Gothic styles which were popular at the time.

During the Victorian era some single storey dwellings were built and these were also often elaborately styled with ornate detailing. Single storey "coach houses", which often incorporated some living accommodation, were also constructed but these invariably had at least a small storage area at first floor level.

This lack of a surviving vernacular tradition for single storey houses combined with the fact that many new dwellings tend to have a square plan form with a very wide roof span, means that the modern bungalow can be particularly alien to the area. It especially fails to relate in a satisfactory way to the scale and character of the more traditional parts of the District and for this reason it is unlikely to be acceptable in such locations.

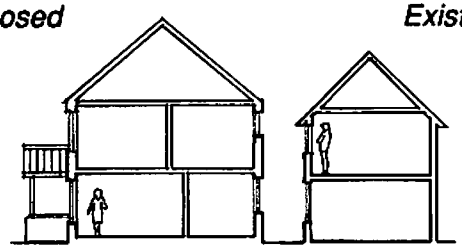
However, more and more people, for various reasons, prefer or need to have all their living accommodation on one level. The illustrations opposite, therefore, provide some idea of the sort of approaches to designing single storey dwellings which could prove acceptable on sites within the District where a traditional design solution is likely to be required. It is important to note that all the suggestions incorporate building forms with a relatively narrow roof span.

SECTION 4 – DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Size and Scale

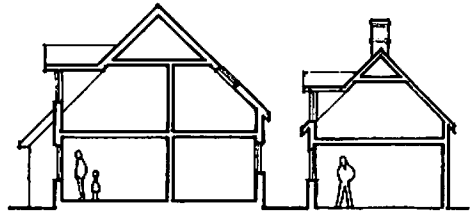
There is often a marked difference between the scale of new houses and their traditional counterparts. The illustrations below and right compare proposals for new dwellings with traditional examples.

Proposed *Existing*



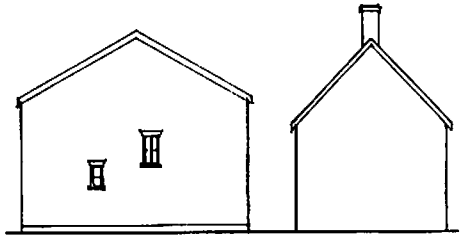
A two storey house
(Elevetations and Sections)

Proposed *Existing*



1½ storey cottage
(Elevations and Sections)

Proposed *Existing*



Semi-detached houses (Elevations)

Proposed *Existing*

Detached houses (Elevations)

4.5 SIZE AND SCALE

When new buildings are constructed within an established street scene, especially one which has a traditional character, the questions of size and scale are very important. In architectural terms size and scale are different. Size is a straight forward measurement. Scale, however, is a relative measure and the scale of a building is judged against other buildings, the space around them and against the size of human beings.

Most traditional buildings and townscapes clearly have a human scale. However, in contrast, it is often the very scale of new development which makes it so inappropriate and therefore unacceptable. With new houses for example, present day expectations for room sizes and internal layouts very often create deep plan arrangements. Placing a single roof over such a layout frequently produces designs which are totally out of scale with their surroundings. (See illustrations opposite).

Most development sites in the District's towns and villages will undoubtably require special one-off designs in order to ensure their suitability. The height of eaves and the effect that the width of the building has on the height and size of the roof are usually the most critical factors which determine the scale of a particular building.

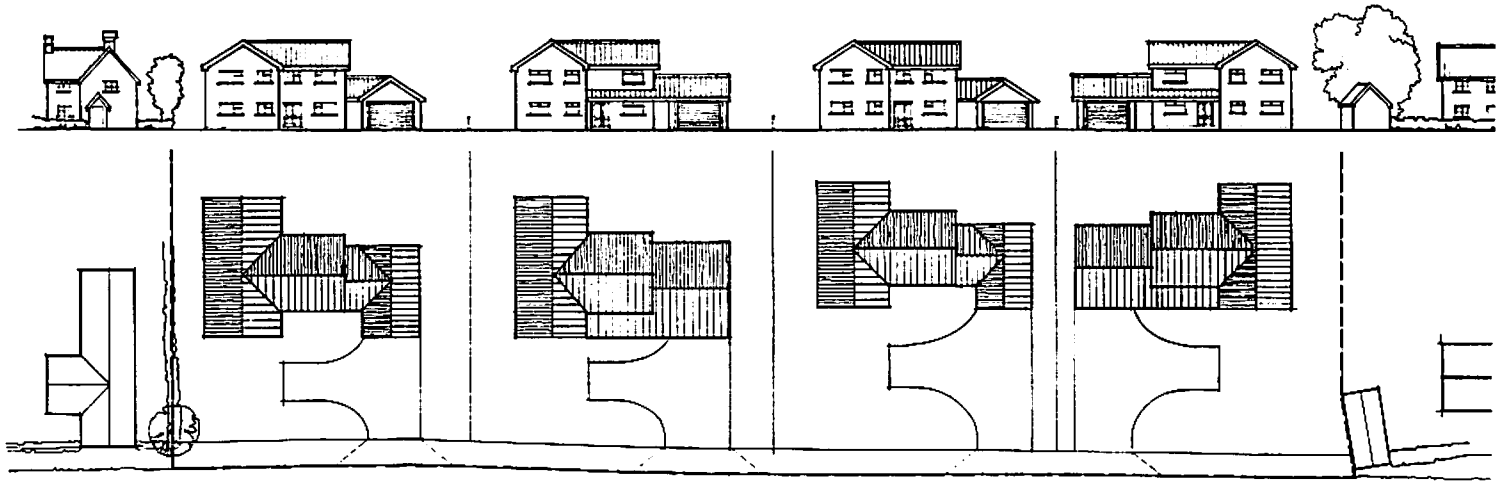
In order to achieve an appropriate scale for a new development within a traditional (i.e. pre 19th Century) setting, it will often be necessary to ensure that houses are kept relatively narrow (the depth of a traditional vernacular building did not normally exceed 5.5 metres). The height of eaves will also be an important consideration. On one and a half storey structures eaves heights should, (when measured from ground level to underside of eaves), be kept to around 3.5 – 3.6 m. For designs which need to relate to the scale of traditional Suffolk timber framed houses or to 18th and 19th Century vernacular brick cottages the aim should be to achieve eaves heights of around 4.5 – 4.6 m.

On houses with brick arches between the heads of windows and eaves, and on those which need to relate to the proportions of Georgian and Victorian buildings, eaves heights would obviously need to be that much higher.

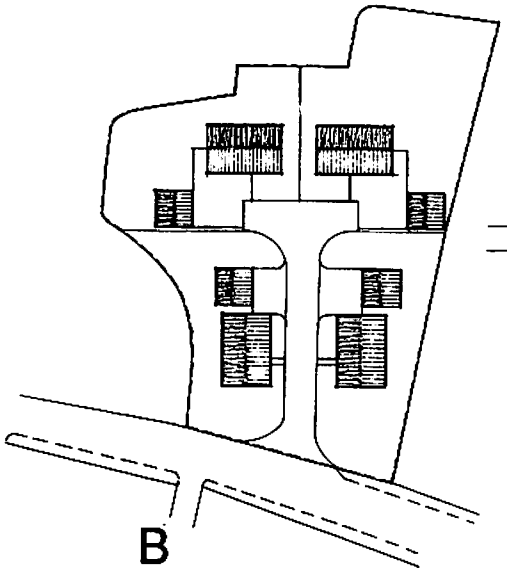
The actual size of any new house in relation to the size of its plot and its proximity to other buildings is also of fundamental importance. Clearly, in order to have a satisfactory relationship with their surroundings new buildings should not be so big that they create a cramped form of development. On many urban sites, therefore, and in village locations in particular, proposals for large houses on small or narrow plots will be strongly resisted by the Council.

Siting and Layout

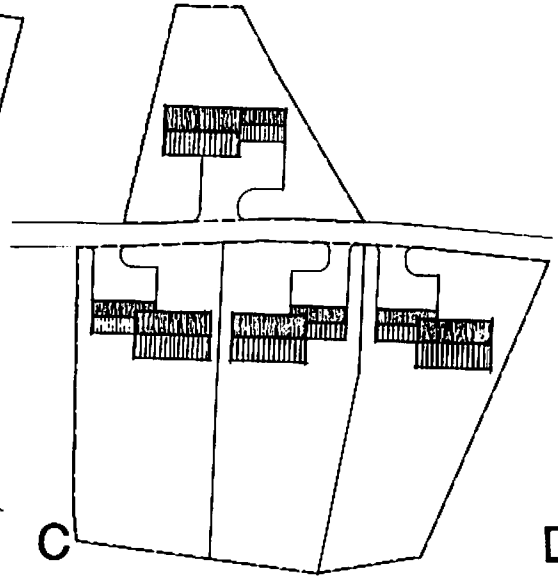
Five examples of layouts resulting from adopting the approach of dividing a site up into similar sized plots for detached dwellings. Such an approach very often creates a development which clearly fails to relate in a satisfactory way to the character and appearance of its surroundings.



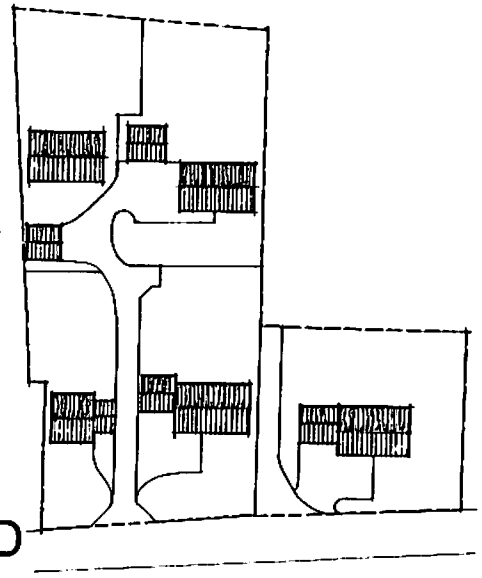
A



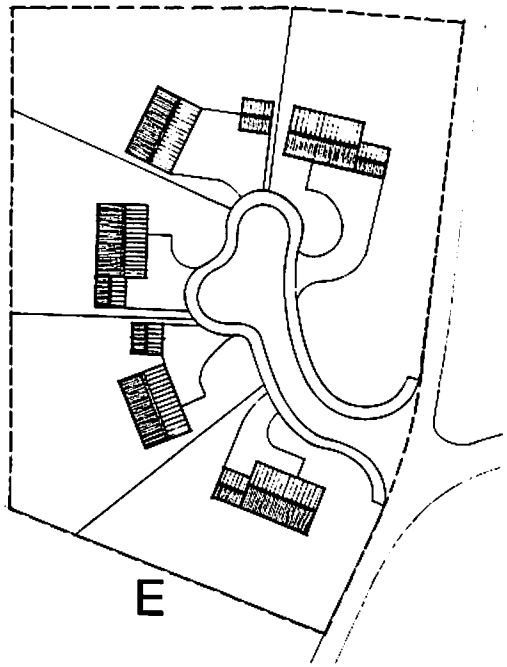
B



C



D



E

4.6 SITING AND LAYOUT

Ideally, new buildings should respect and follow the traditional pattern of development in towns and villages. However, an unfortunate aspect of much recent new development throughout the District has been the conspicuous lack of consideration given to the siting of new houses and the resulting relationship with adjacent properties and the established street scene.

All too often proposals are based upon the concept of simply dividing a site up into similar sized pieces of land (as illustrated in A to E opposite). The result has been the construction of large detached houses all over the District quite often on small plots, and although physically it has just about been possible to accommodate them on the site, along with the required vehicular turning areas, visibility splays, garaging and parking spaces, the overall visual effect has clearly been unsatisfactory.

In order to overcome this problem in the future, the District Council will ensure that the size and siting of new buildings which are proposed for any particular site are appropriate and that they will satisfactorily integrate with the general character of the neighbourhood.

The relationship between the heights of existing and proposed buildings and new site levels in relation to the topography of the surrounding land will, in themselves, also be a crucial factor in determining the suitability of new buildings for any particular site.

In areas of low density development and in most village locations proposals for large detached houses will require individual plots to be big enough to comfortably accommodate them in a way which will give the impression of buildings being situated within landscaped grounds. If there is not enough space to satisfactorily achieve this then either the houses themselves will need to be made smaller or the number of dwellings proposed for the site will have to be reduced.

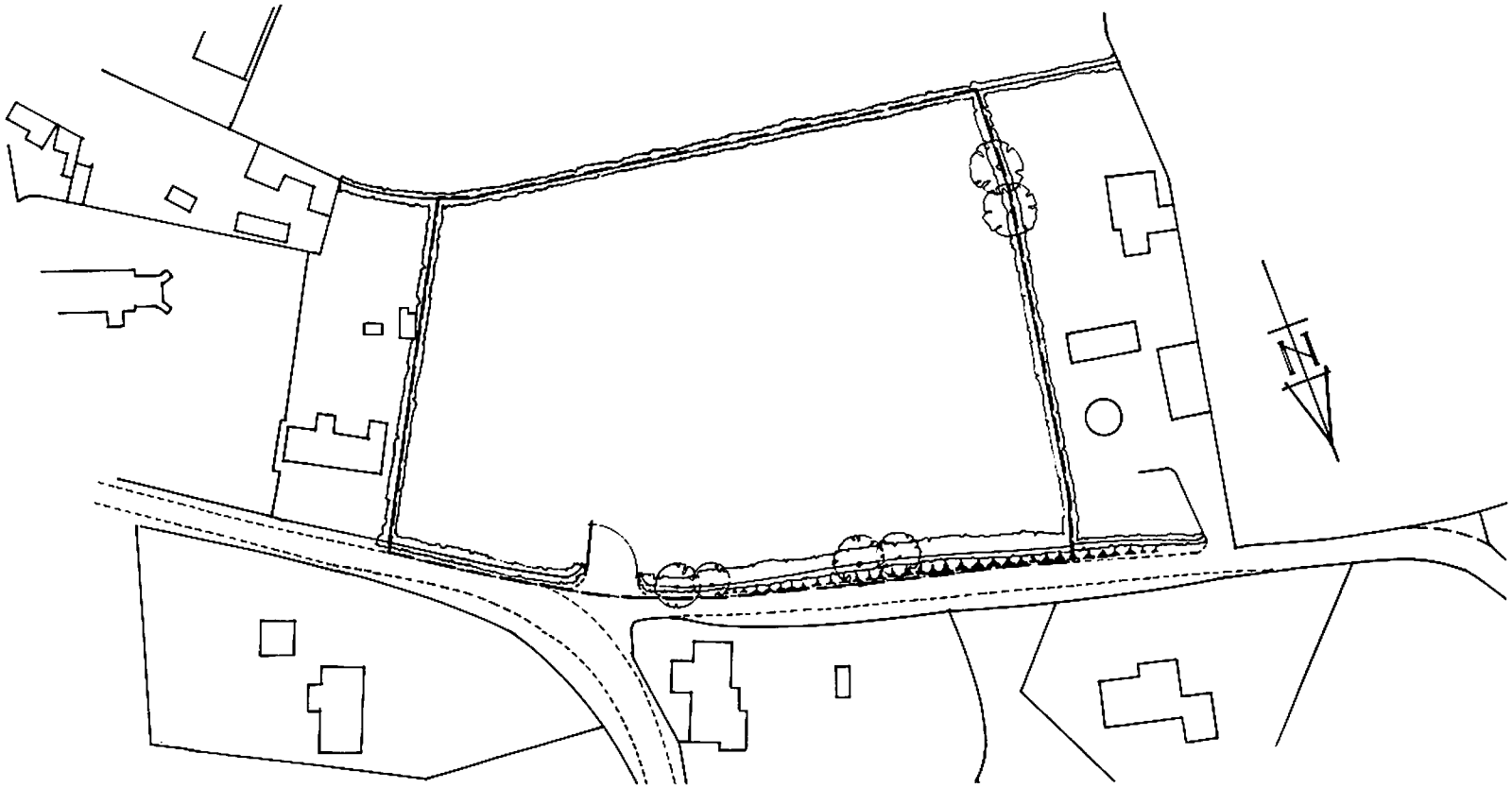
In areas where it is desirable to reflect the traditional pattern of development, houses may also need to be brought forward on a site in order to form a more enclosed group with those alongside and semi-detached, linked or terraced properties may have to be considered, rather than detached.

An example of a more traditional approach to layouts and the siting of new buildings is shown over the page. It illustrates an alternative to the proposals shown in layout E opposite. (Further examples are illustrated on page 22 and pages 24 to 29 inclusive).

SECTION 4 – DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

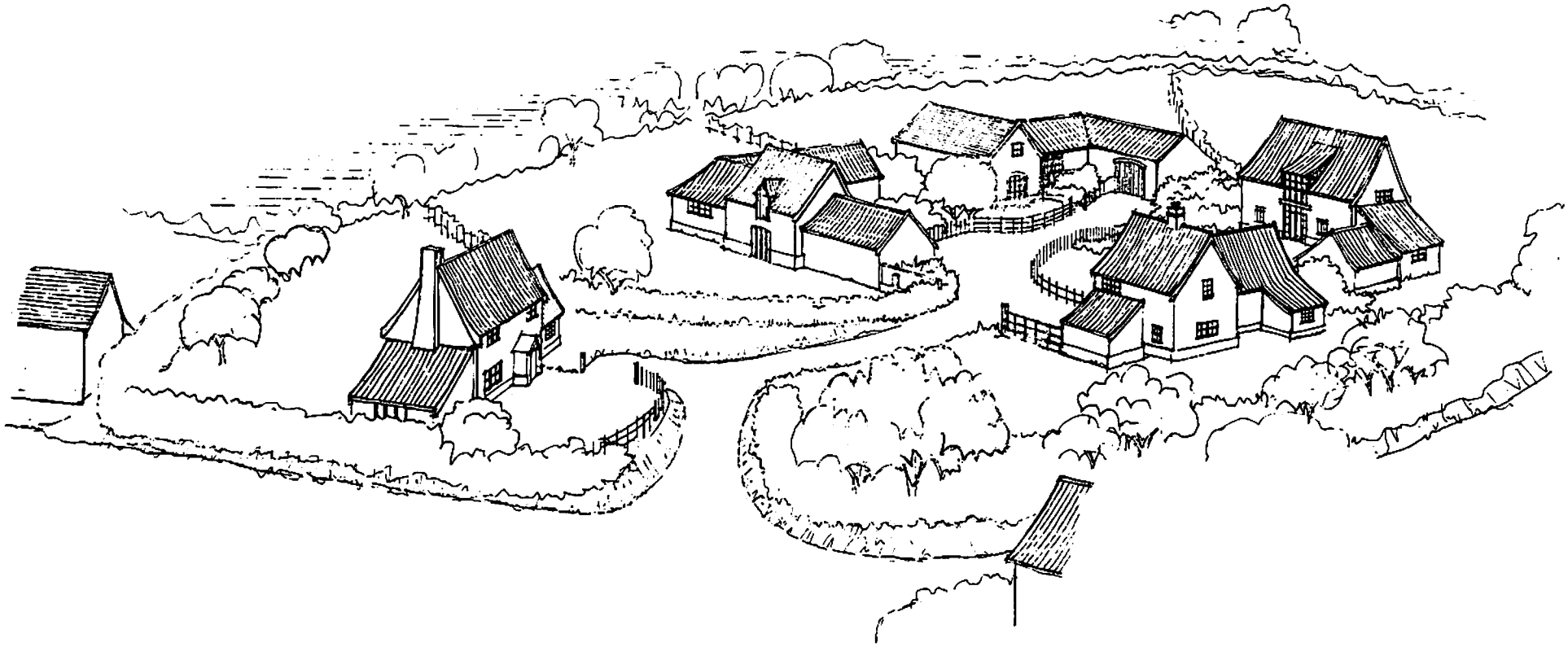
Siting and Layout

This potential development site is located on the edge of a traditional village. The ground gently slopes up from the village centre in the East. The Southern boundary is open to long views across farmland. The North is bounded by a high bank and mature hedge. To the West of the site on high ground is a detached traditional house and outbuildings. On page 18 Layout E shows a typical "mini-estate" design approach which would be inappropriate in this location. The sketch opposite shows an alternative approach illustrating how new houses can blend in with the existing character of the area by the use of traditional forms and siting patterns.

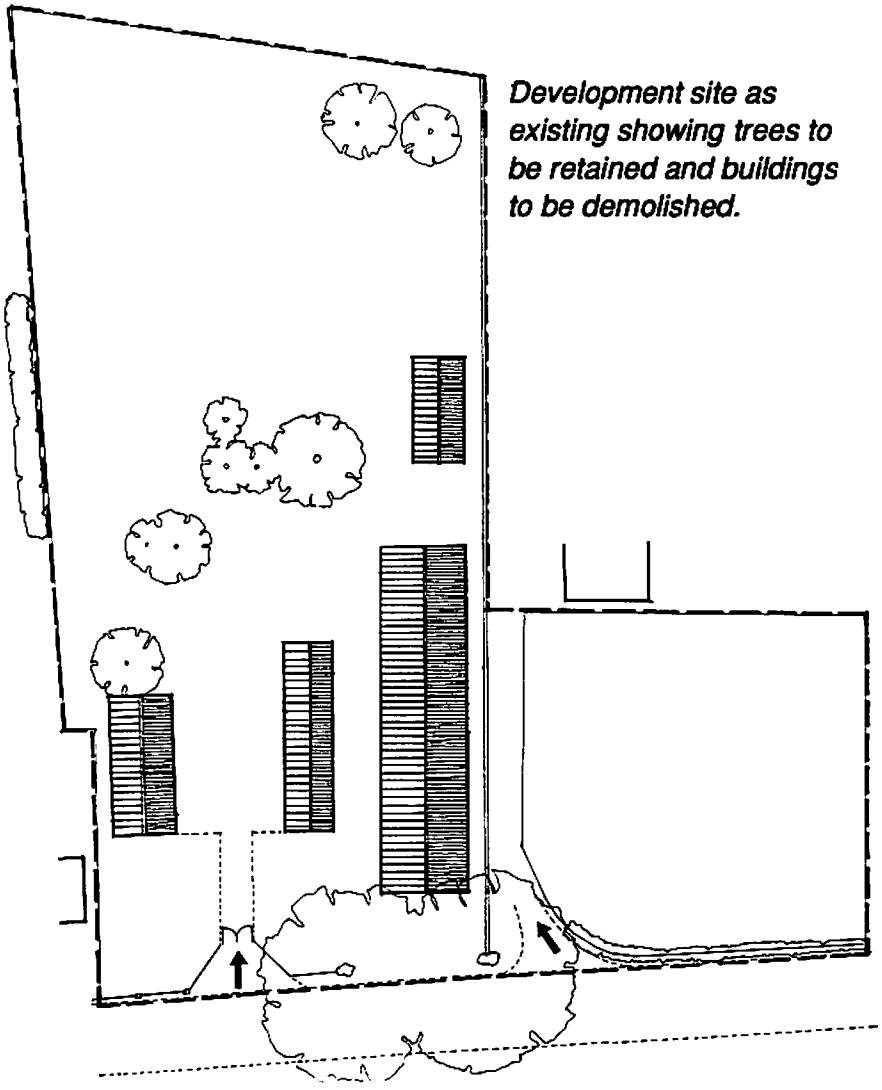


4.6 SITING AND LAYOUT

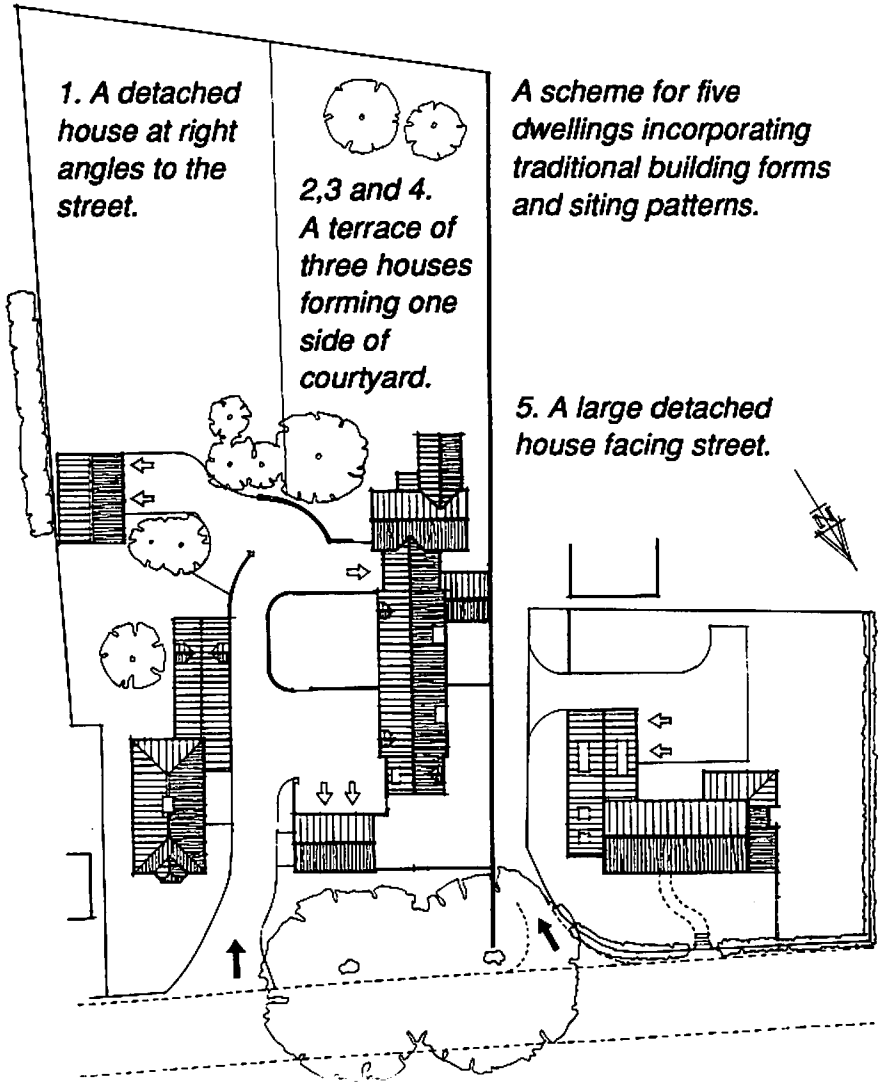
A detached house of a traditional scale and form is positioned near the entrance to the site in a way which will relate well to the existing street scene. The other four houses form a close-knit group around a central courtyard in a way which is reminiscent of traditional agricultural buildings. Lower built forms back on to the open farmland to the South. The higher buildings will be seen above these roofs with a backdrop of the trees and mature hedgerow to the North.



Another design for a small residential development where the layout, siting of buildings, access and parking arrangements combine to reflect the traditional pattern of development in the area. It illustrates an alternative proposal to that shown in layout D on page 18.
(See page 34 for illustrations of elevations).



Development site as existing showing trees to be retained and buildings to be demolished.



1. A detached house at right angles to the street.

2,3 and 4. A terrace of three houses forming one side of courtyard.

5. A large detached house facing street.

A scheme for five dwellings incorporating traditional building forms and siting patterns.

4.7 ACCESS, DRIVEWAYS AND PARKING

In many traditional areas in both towns and villages, groups of buildings which have off street parking have access routes via private drives (which are often shared) with parking areas located towards the back of the property. The result is that driveways, turning spaces and garages are not particularly prominent in the street scene.

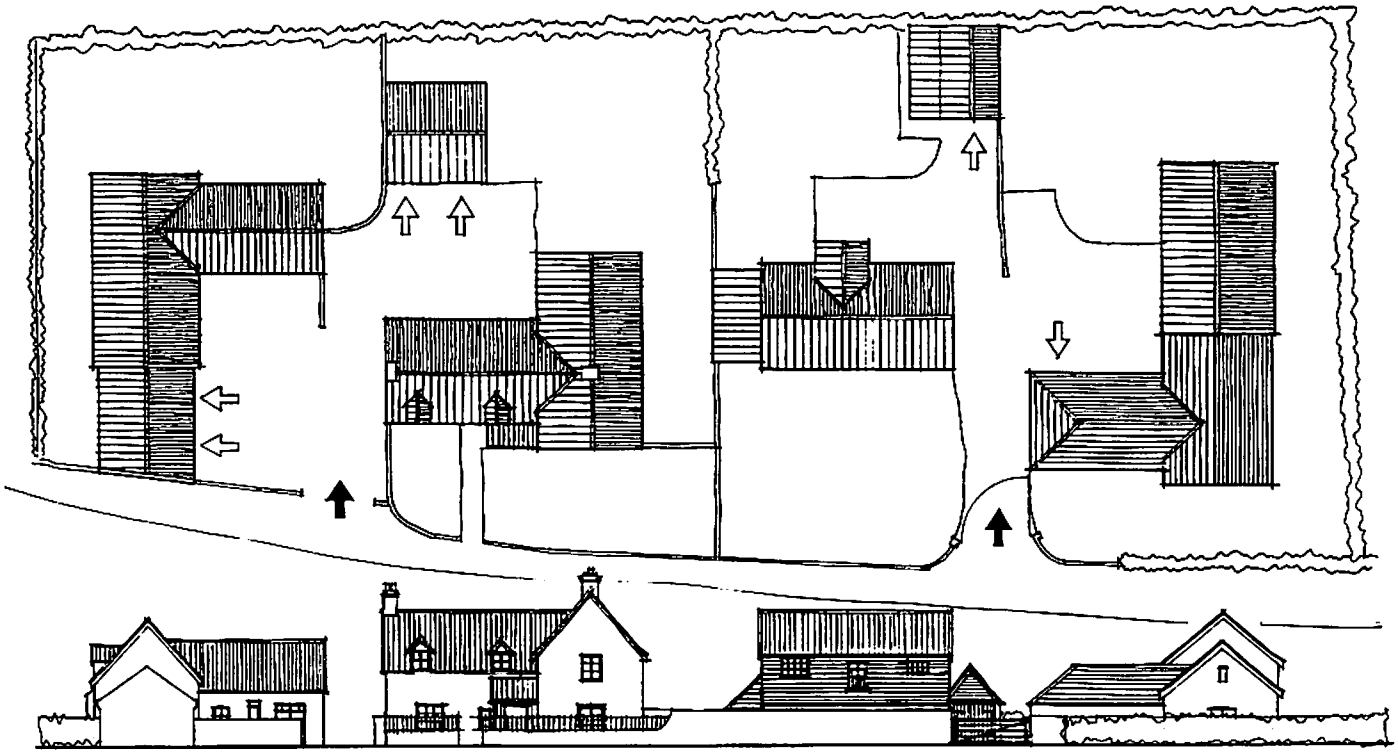
In contrast many new developments have been laid out so that each individual dwelling has a separate access from the highway and separate parking, garaging and turning areas at the front or side of the house, facing onto the road. These features invariably dominate the layout and as a consequence detract from the often attractive qualities of the existing street scene. The Council will, therefore, reject designs where it is clear that this aspect of a development proposal has not been satisfactorily resolved.

Although adequate consideration must be given to the Highway Authorities requirements for safe access points, designers should always ensure that the layout of a development site and location of buildings on it is not wholly determined by having to accommodate the motor car.

When designing the access for a development it is particularly important on sites in both towns and villages that old boundary walls are not unnecessarily demolished and that existing mature hedges and trees are not removed along frontages. Where an open frontage does exist it is often desirable in both urban and rural situations to create some form of enclosure along the frontage. Hedge planting is encouraged on rural sites, whereas in urban areas (and in some rural locations) it is often preferable to place a new property fairly close to the road in order to reinforce the traditional pattern of development. Such an approach should be perfectly possible alongside less busy roads. This then allows parking and turning areas and garages to be located further back on the site, behind the frontage buildings, where they will have far less an impact on the street scene.

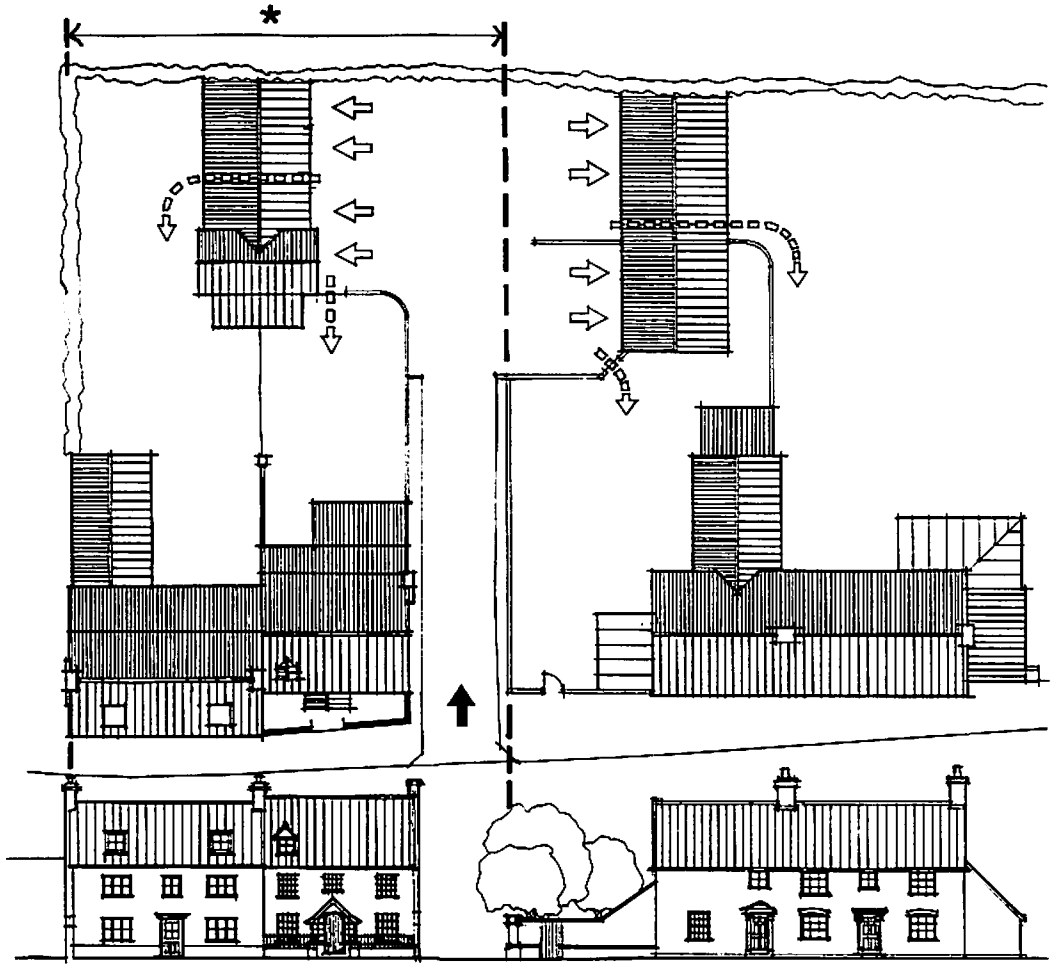
Where this is not possible for one reason or another, one alternative which sometimes proves suitable involves setting a garage and/or storage buildings alongside the frontage. In such a location the garage/store is frequently better integrated into the development because its side or rear wall can form part of a suitably detailed front boundary wall. Cladding part of the structure with black boarding, using clay tiles for the roof and suitably detailed eaves, verges and brickwork can create a similar composition to an attractive group of traditional workshops or farm buildings. Examples of these and other approaches to accommodating driveways and parking areas are indicated on the illustrations opposite and overleaf.

Further examples of small residential developments where the design and layout complements the traditional architectural character of the District:



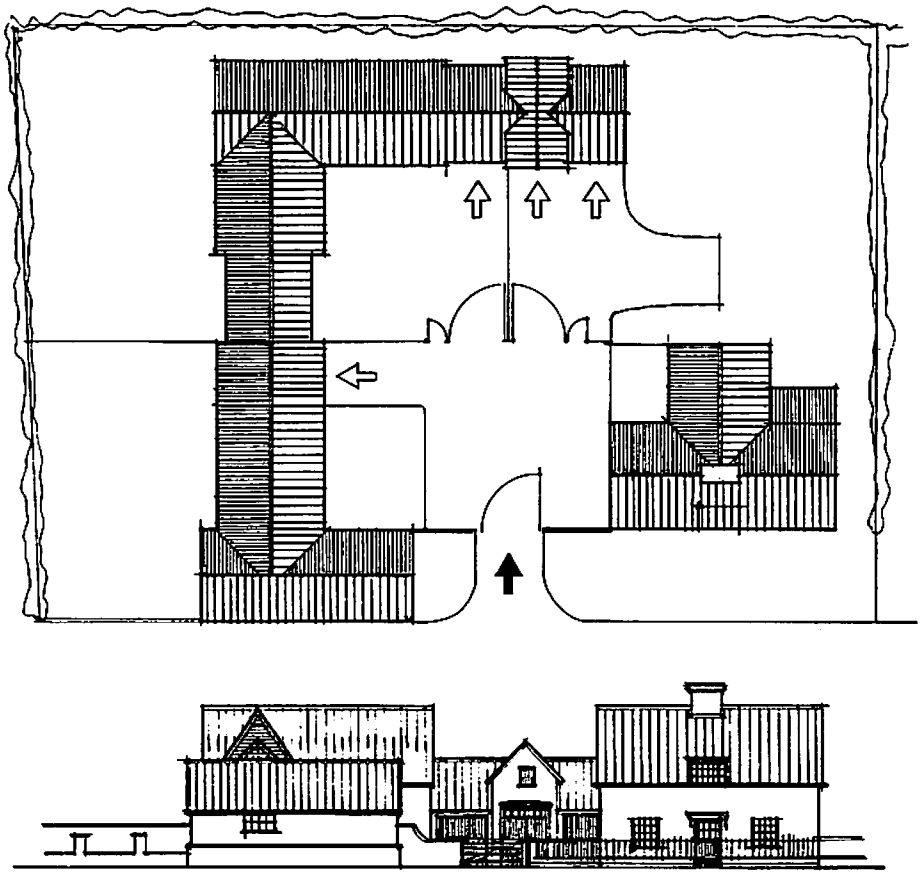
1. Four houses served by two shared driveways. With layouts such as this the houses, garages, outbuildings and boundary walls all combine to create an attractive and interesting street scene.

4.7 ACCESS, DRIVEWAYS AND PARKING

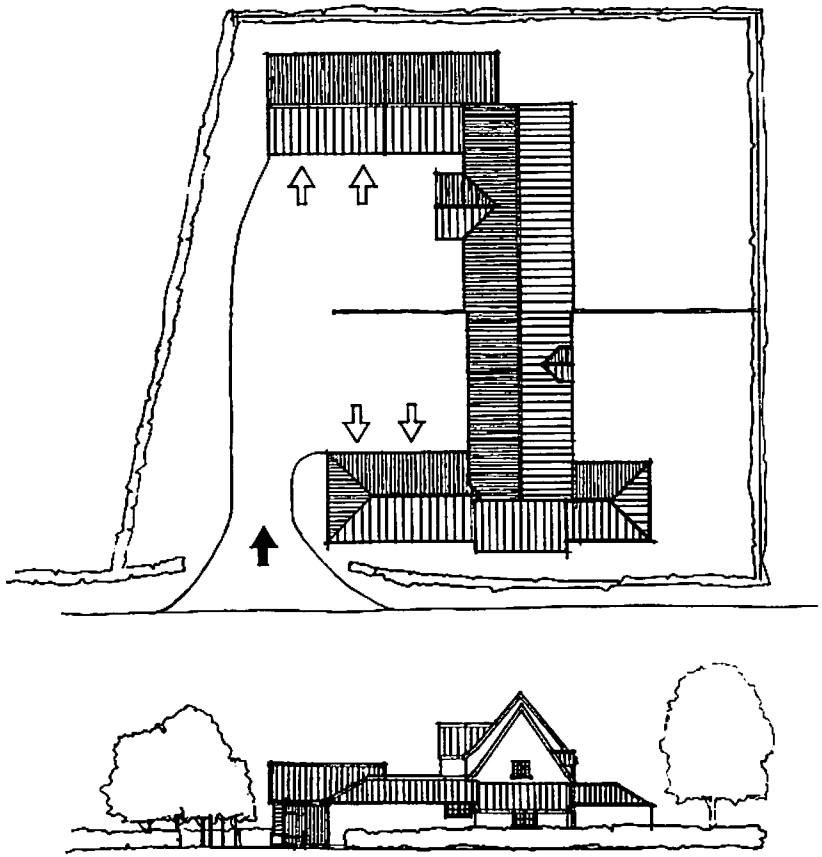


2. A frontage development of four houses all served by a shared, single driveway. Each house has a double garage located in a walled courtyard at the back of the site.

** Note: Smaller sites could accommodate two (semi-detached) houses along the frontage. These would be served by a single driveway to the side providing access to a shared garage block to the rear.*

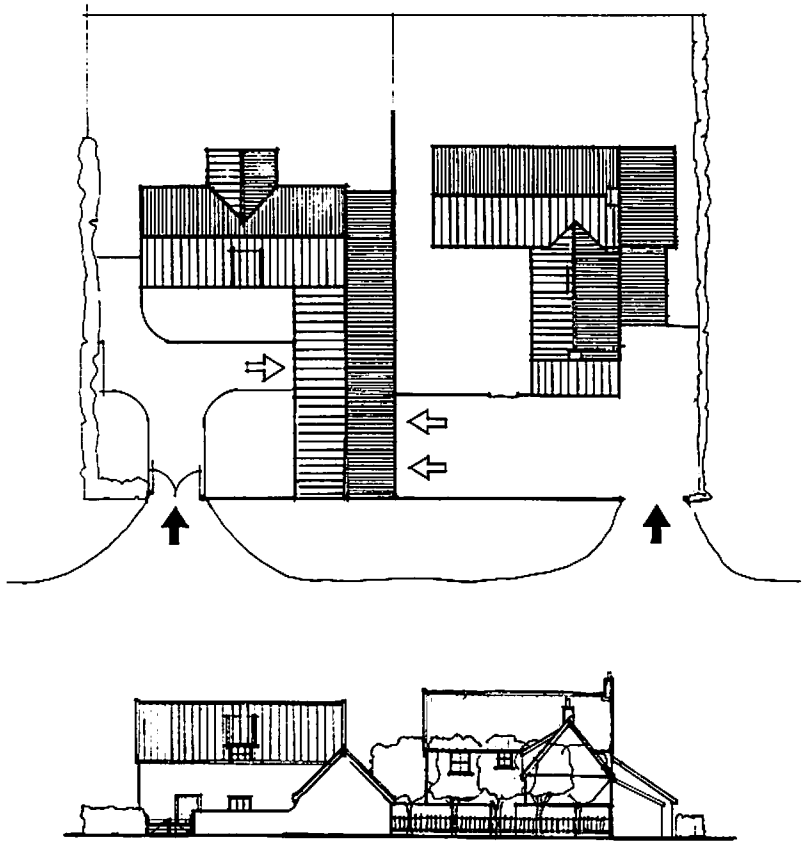


3. Three houses forming an attractive courtyard served by a single access. This layout is reminiscent of a tradtional group of farm buildings.

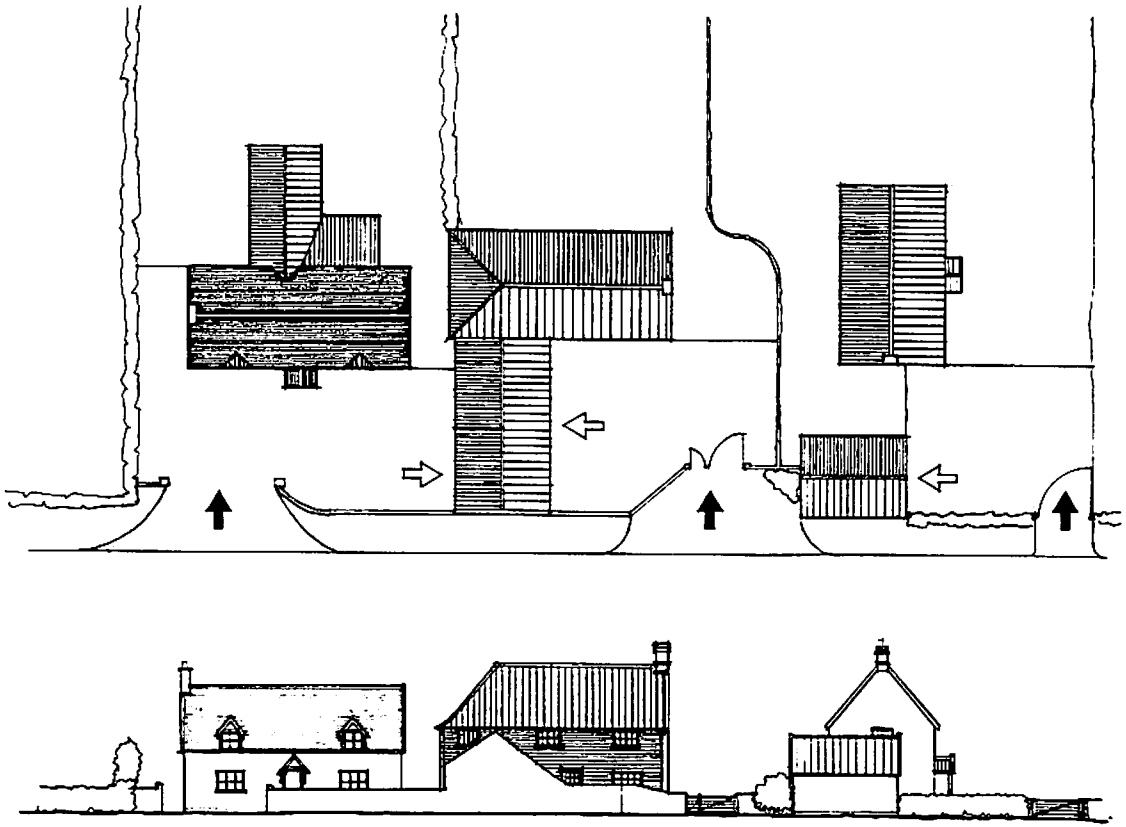


4. Another courtyard development with the design and layout for two houses again reflecting the form and character of the areas traditional buildings.

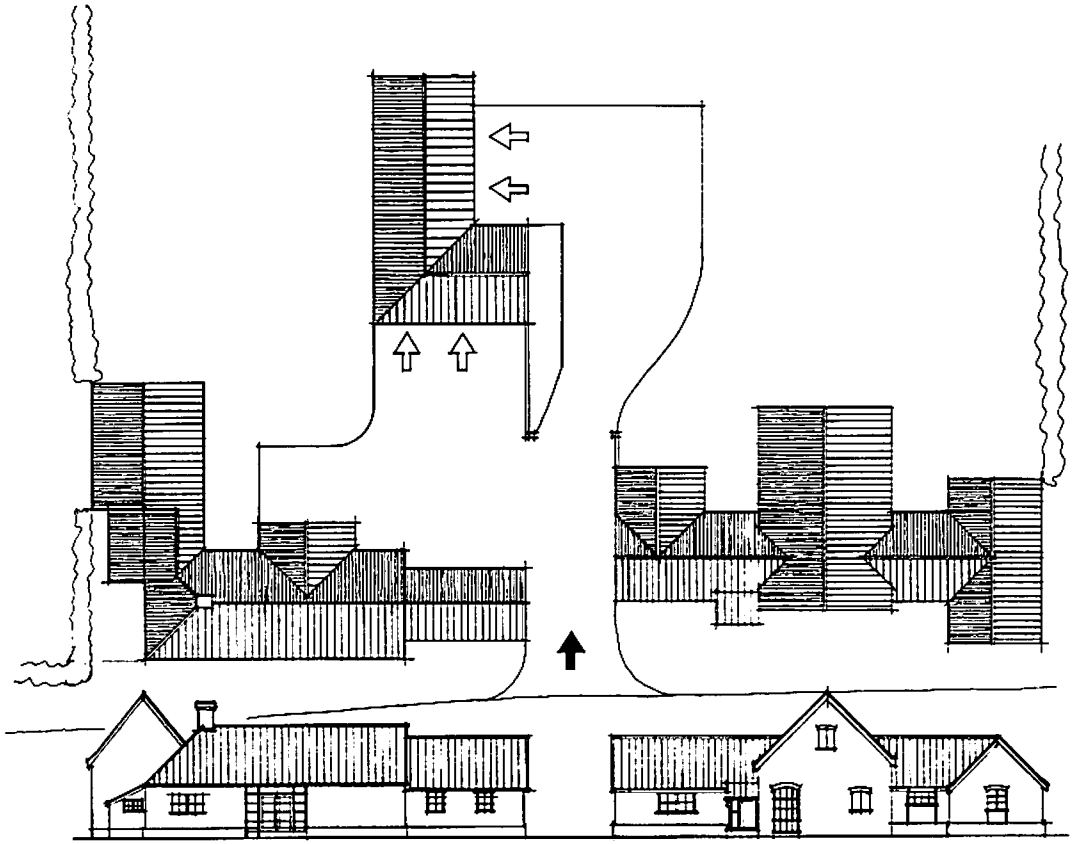
4.7 ACCESS, DRIVEWAYS AND PARKING



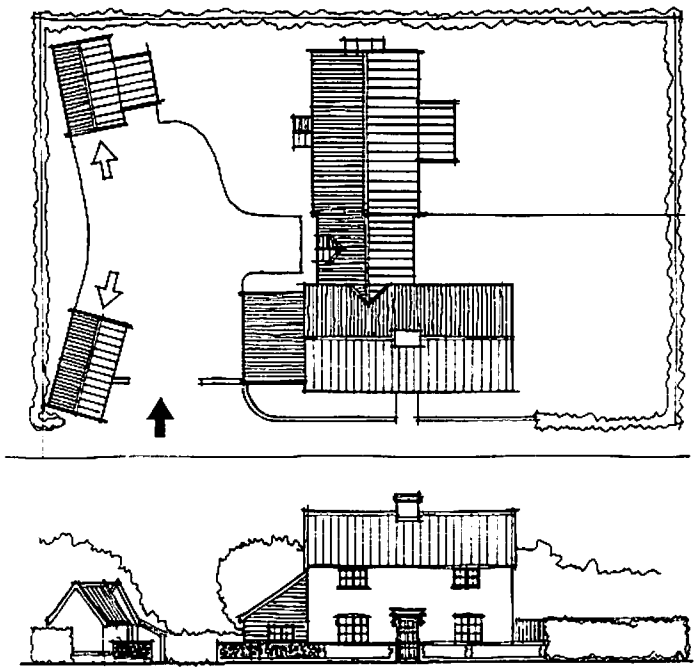
5. A layout illustrating one way of designing an attractive pair of houses with garages and turning areas all located at the front of the site.



6. Three detached houses all with separate access points. This layout also illustrates an approach which successfully integrates frontage garages into the development.

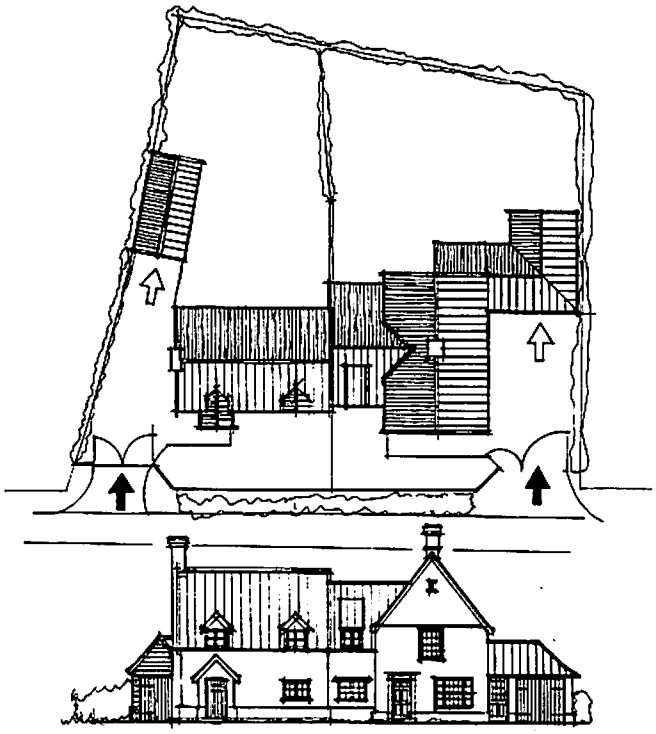


7. A pair of large, mainly single storey dwellings with a single access serving a shared garage and storage building. The houses located close to the road creates an interesting frontage.

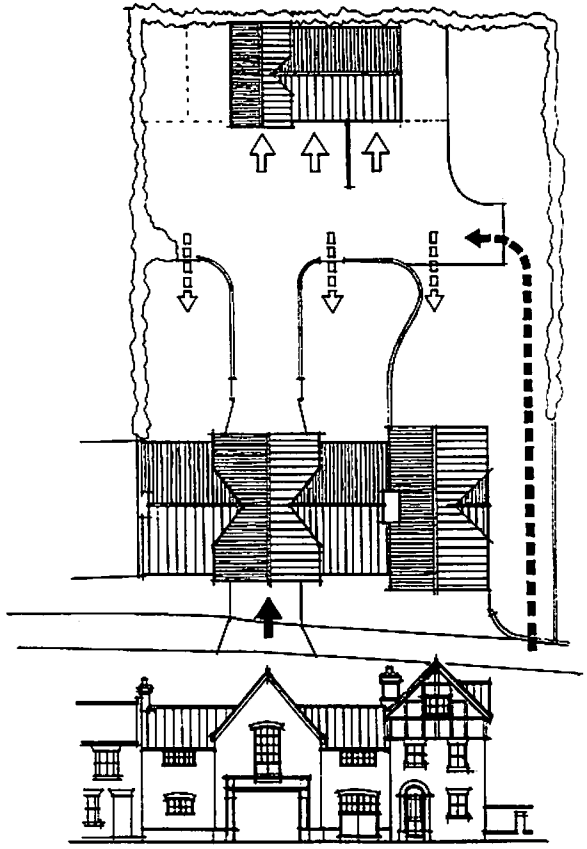


8. Two houses with individual garages and a shared access. An alternative to both houses fronting the road. Less predictable approaches such as this can often create much more interesting compositions.

4.7 ACCESS, DRIVEWAYS AND PARKING



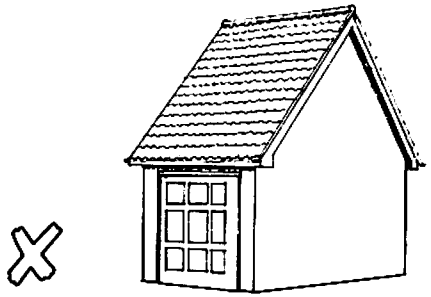
9. This somewhat standard approach with garages set close to the back of a pair of semi-detached houses, will only work well if the garages and the area covered by driveways is relatively small.



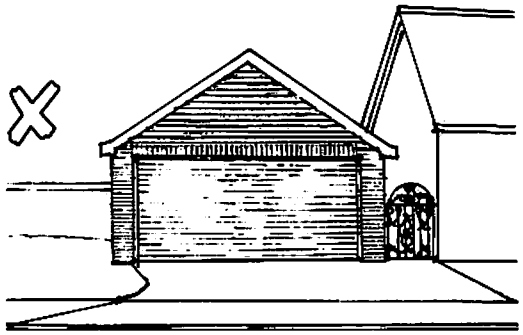
10. A frontage development of three houses in an urban location. A shared garage block and associated turning area is well screened from the road. Access can be via an opening through the buildings or alongside them.

SECTION 4 – DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

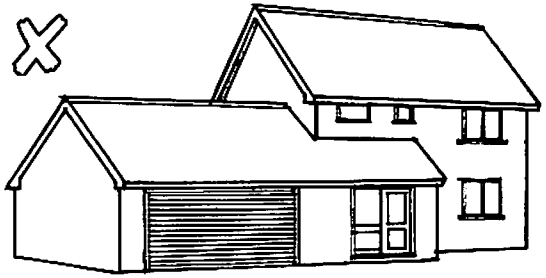
Garages



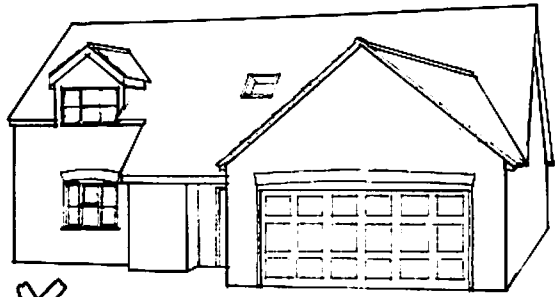
Avoid garages with roofs which span the "wrong way".



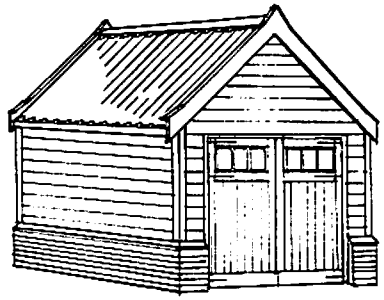
Avoid badly proportioned structures with wide openings and straight brick soldier courses over doors.

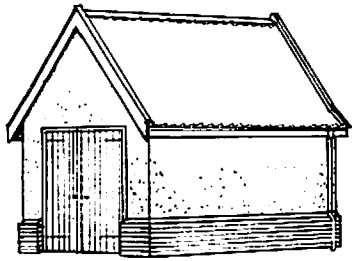


Try to avoid linking the roof of a porch and garage in this way. It is better to have a visual separation between the two.

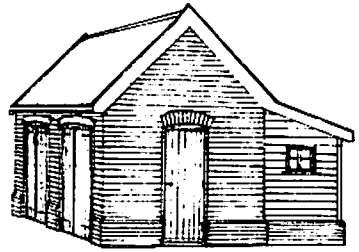


Designs with integral garages will be discouraged in many locations as they tend to dominate the form and appearance of a house.





Preferred designs for single detached garages which can either be brick-faced, weather-boarded or rendered.



A double garage incorporating a lean-to roof.

4.8 GARAGES

Most properties built before the 1930's were constructed without having to accommodate the motor car, although some did have small driveways at the front or at the side, with gates, to provide access to the land at the rear. In contrast with this many new developments have been designed with motor vehicles very much in mind and as a consequence are visually dominated by driveways, garages and parking areas. However, the careful consideration of not only the siting of garages but also their size, form and design will help to overcome this problem.

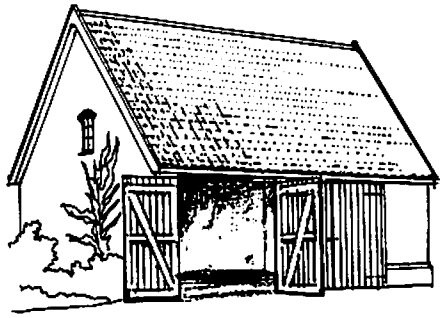
Rather than being built as an integral part of the dwelling, garages, because of the size of the doors, are almost always better if they appear as linked or free standing structures. There are many precedents for this throughout the District, in both rural and urban situations, where out-buildings of a traditional form, built with traditional materials, combine with the main buildings on a site to create very interesting and attractive compositions.

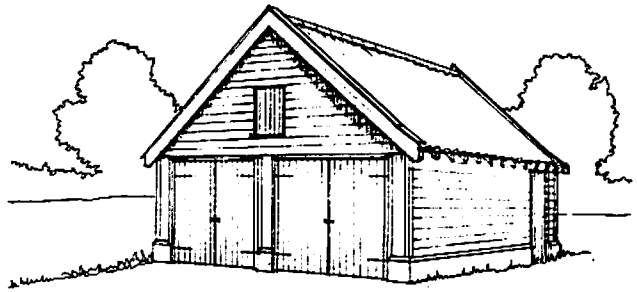
The existence of these examples illustrate the fact that it should be possible to accommodate ancillary buildings such as garages on development sites in such a way that they do not dominate or compromise the design solution. The Council will, therefore, reject any designs where this aspect has not been satisfactorily resolved.

Due to their size and scale and the fact that they can be designed to appear as a simple extension or as a traditional out-building, accommodating single garages on development sites is far less of a problem than double garages. Double garages are difficult not only because of their size but also because they have a plan form which is usually close to a square. Placing a pitched roof over such a shape produces a structure with a truncated appearance which is made worse when it is combined with a double width opening and an up and over door.

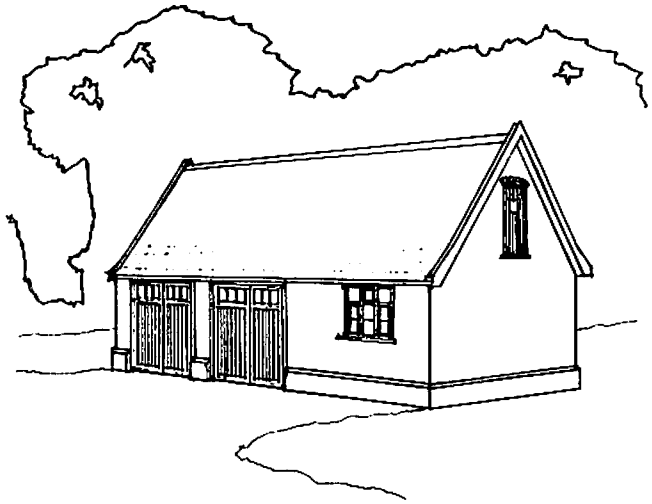
Sometimes hips rather than gables are used to reduce the bulk of the structure but this produces a pyramid roof. Where desirable this can sometimes form an attractive focal point, especially if the roof is finished with a decorative finial. However, care should be taken, because as well as being a non-traditional roof form, a pyramid roof will draw attention to itself and will compete visually with the principle buildings on and around the site.

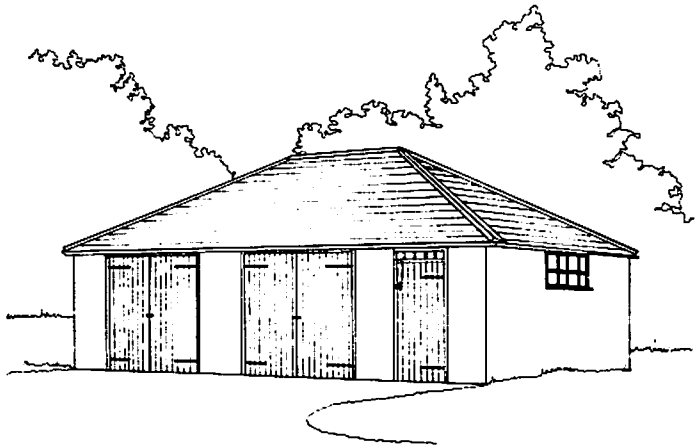
It is often preferable to actually enlarge the structure of a double garage (perhaps by incorporating storage or a workshop area) which would then produce a building of more satisfactory proportions, reflecting the form and the character of a traditional ancillary building or workshop. This effect can be further emphasised by using traditional materials and details. Normally, materials should complement the main building, however, on a detached structure a roof of clay pantiles, walls of red brick or black stained boarding with a red brick plinth is usually the most appropriate for the area. Examples of single and double linked and detached garages together with designs for shared garage blocks are illustrated opposite and over the page.

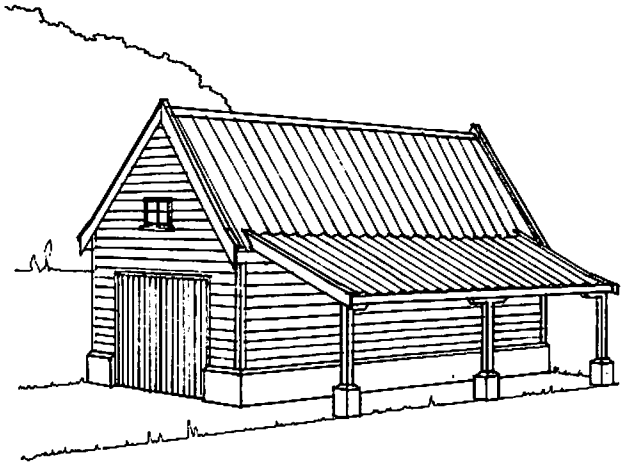




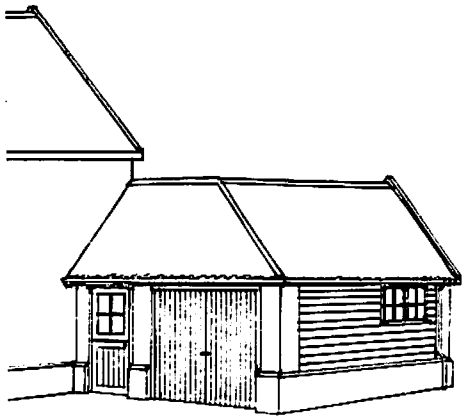
Although grages should never appear too dominant on a site, the form and appearance of a double garage can sometimes be improved by actually enlarging the structure. These examples illustrate structures which incorporate storage and workshop areas.



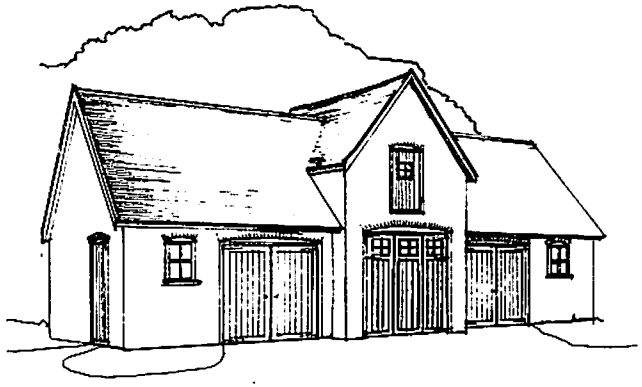


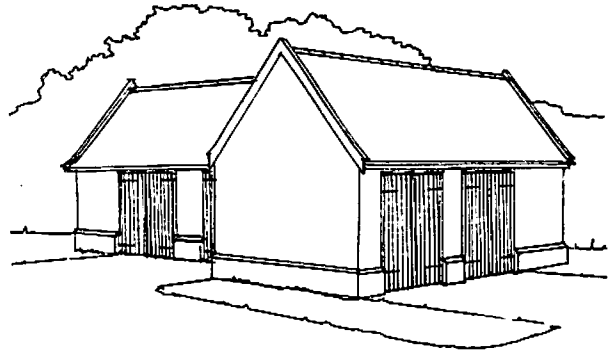


4.8 GARAGES

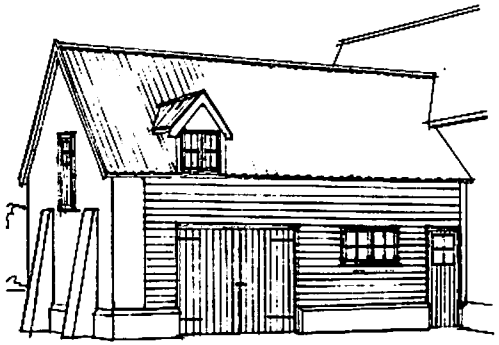


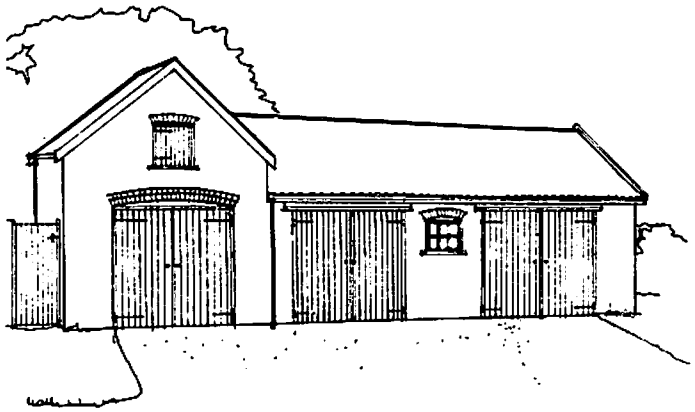
Two examples (above and below) of linked garages incorporating entrance lobbies.

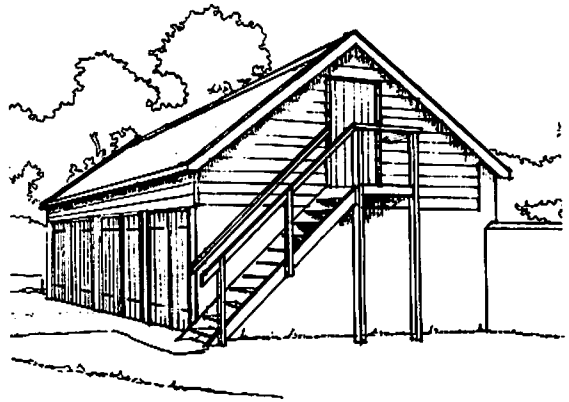




Designs for shared garage blocks, which reflect the form and character of the areas traditional out-buildings.



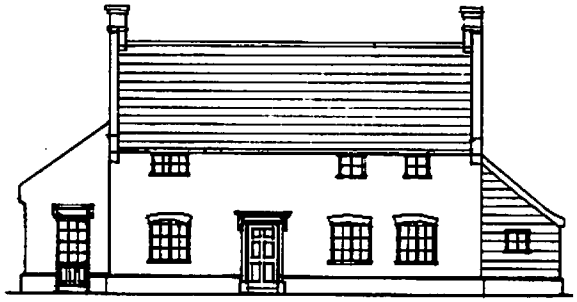




SECTION 4 – DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

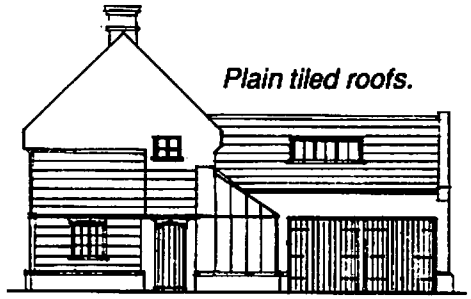
Materials

The use of materials which reflect and reinforce the traditional building character of the area will be encouraged.



Soft red bricks.

White boarding to lean-to.

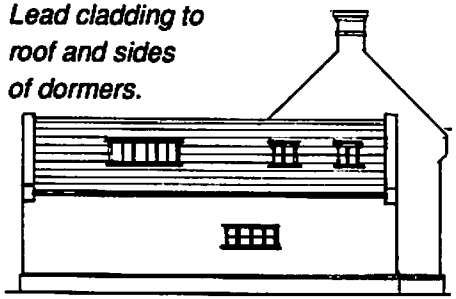


Plain tiled roofs.

Black timber garage doors.

White painted timber windows, joinery and conservatory.

Lead cladding to roof and sides of dormers.



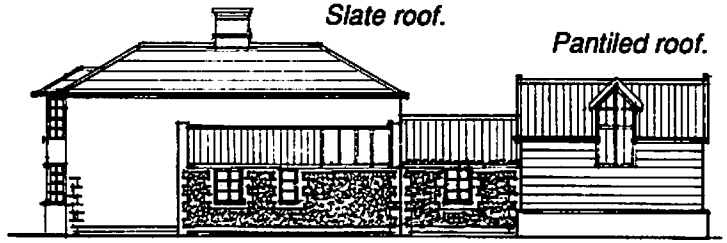
Soft red brick.

Left and above *Elevations to Plot 4.*

Right *Side Elevation to Plot 1.*

White painted timber windows and joinery.

White gault brick with quoins.



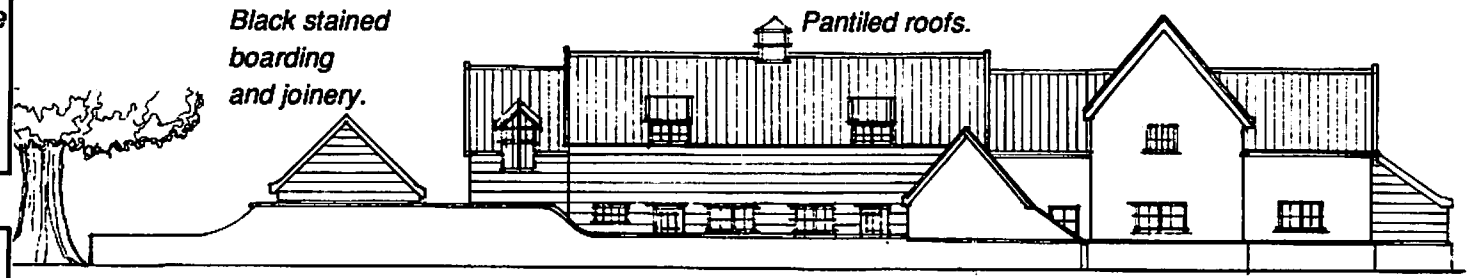
Slate roof.

Pantiled roof.

Flint with white brick dressing.

Black stained boarding.

Note: *These are some of the elevations of the buildings proposed for the site layout shown on page 20.*



Black stained boarding and joinery.

Pantiled roofs.

Right *Rear Elevation of Terrace.*

Flint wall with red brick.

Black stained boarding.

White painted windows.

Soft red bricks.

Black stained boarding.

4.9 MATERIALS

Many new houses in the area have been built using materials which show a marked disregard for those which are traditional to the District. This has clearly illustrated the fact that not only is the use of materials of suitable texture, colour and weathering properties often just as important as the siting, form and design of new buildings themselves, but also that the careful choice of sympathetic materials can be of great assistance in ensuring that new development is successfully integrated into the areas existing towns and villages.

There is a vast range of materials now available to the modern house builder. Often the choice of roof tile, facing brick or render is made solely in order to achieve variety. This recent trend which has encouraged variety in order to provide interest and visual relief has, however, very often appeared artificial and contrived.

Furthermore, it is often wrongly assumed that uniformity in building automatically produces monotony. The more attractive traditional townscape have a unity which is derived from the repetitive use of a limited number of tried and tested materials, finishes and details. An important example of this in the District is the widespread use of white painted timber joinery, for windows in particular, which provides the street scene with a degree of continuity even in areas which comprise buildings of different styles, size and age.

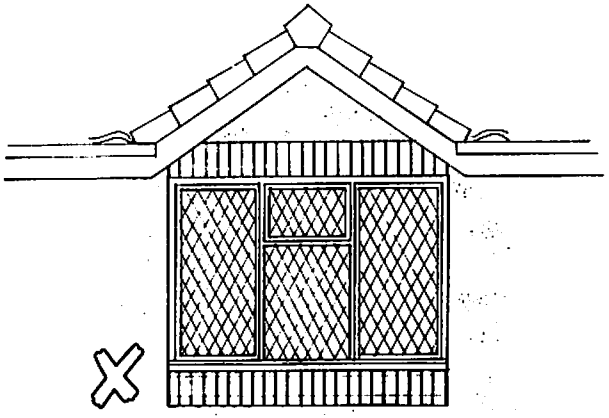
Generally, materials should be chosen which will reflect and reinforce the building traditions of the area. Where, for one reason or another, it is not appropriate to use traditional materials, then new products should be chosen which will either harmonise with, or relate in a satisfactory way to, the District's architectural character.

The range of traditional building materials within the District is limited to soft red or white gault brick, flint, render, white painted and tarred timber boarding, white painted joinery, orange or black glazed clay pantiles, red clay plain tiles, slates and thatch.

Where new development is to take place alongside traditional buildings it is especially important that appropriate traditional materials are used. This is because whilst many man-made materials, such as concrete tiles and artificial slates, may appear to be a close match to their traditional counterparts, their weathering properties are always very different.

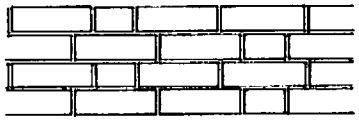
It is also important that appropriately coloured and textured orange/red bricks are used as many of the "red" bricks that are currently on the market, when placed alongside the traditional Suffolk red, appear very pink , purple or brown in contrast. Care should also be taken when specifying white bricks to match the traditional gault bricks of the area because many modern buff or so called white bricks are in fact yellow or brown in comparison.

Detailing and Finishes

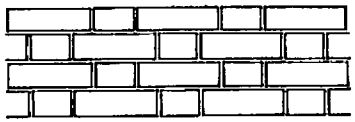


Avoid arbitrary, fussy or contrived detailing.

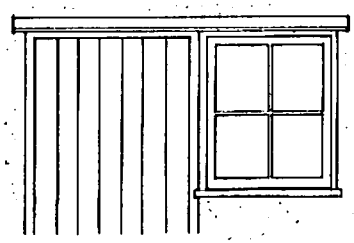
"Sussex" bond.



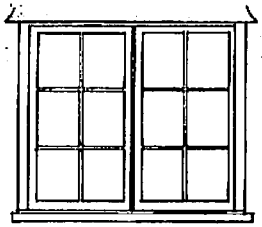
"Flemish" bond.



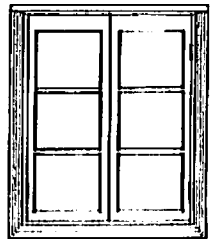
Two examples of preferred brick bonding for traditional locations.



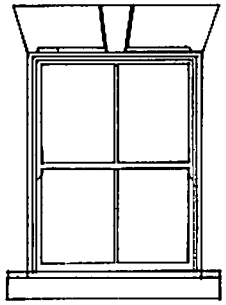
A traditional timber prentice board above an opening in a rendered wall.



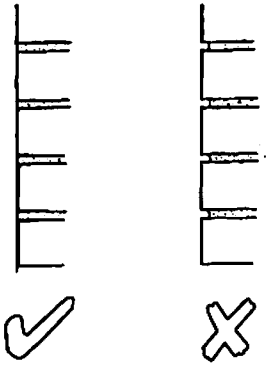
A simple drip mould. Brick arches are unnecessary on rendered buildings.



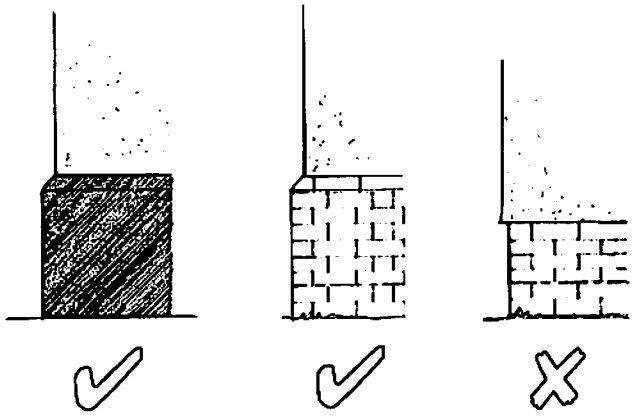
A simple timber architrave around a window in a rendered wall.



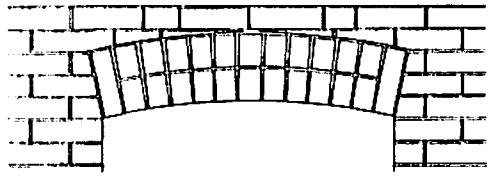
Rendered lintels or reconstituted stone lintels and cills can be appropriate on brick buildings.



Recessed joints are not a traditional feature.



Rendered buildings should have a traditional projecting plinth.



An example of a simple 225mm segmental arch.

5.1 DETAILING AND FINISHES

When detailing new buildings and specifying finishes, important lessons are to be learnt from the simplicity of the areas traditional buildings. Anything which will appear too fussy, arbitrary or contrived should be avoided.

Furthermore, the effect of using the right materials on a new building of the correct form and scale can be undermined by using those materials in an inappropriate way or by incorporating the wrong sort of detailing. In many instances modern brick bonding and pointing, the verge, ridge and eaves detailing on roofs, the detailing around openings and the design, profiles and finish of modern windows and doors, can all tend to lack refinement and appear very crude and clumsy when compared with those on older buildings.

A brick wall built in stretcher bond with recessed cement mortar joints for example, appears very different to traditional Flemish bond walling with thin, flush, lime mortar joints, even when exactly the same brick is used. On some developments, therefore, such as sites located within conservation areas, the District Council may require special brick bonding and pointing to be used (e.g. Flemish or Sussex bond).

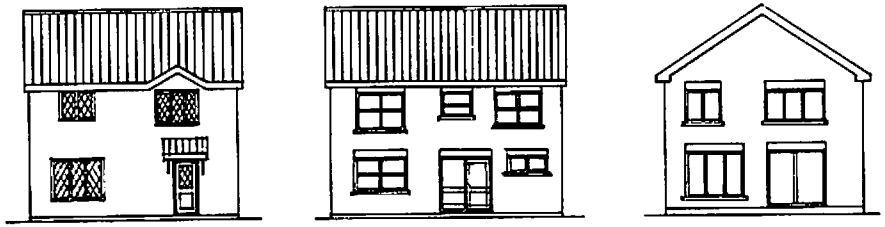
The effect of a carefully designed building using the right roofing and facing materials can be spoilt by the timber joinery, window and door frames all being stained brown rather than painted the traditional white. The use of brown stain is growing in popularity, however, it does have a particularly discordant effect in the area. Not only does it undermine the visual unity created by the widespread use of white but is also clashes with the colours of the orange/red of the traditional bricks and clay tiles and traditional colour washes the are used on rendered buildings (especially Suffolk pink!).

Rendered houses are encouraged in the District because they can satisfactorily relate to the traditional Suffolk plastered timber framed house. However, recessed windows and doors and the use of brick soldier courses, arches and cills on rendered buildings are inappropriate and unnecessary. It is also preferable that the design incorporates a brick, a black painted brick or rendered plinth which projects out beyond the face of the rendered walls in the traditional manner (see illustrations opposite).

On new brick buildings openings as a general rule should incorporate simple traditional detailing such as a plain half brick or 225mm brick segmental arch. Where possible straight brick soldier courses should be avoided as they are not a traditional detail. Beneath these a plain, simple timber cill rather than an over elaborate and bulky projecting brick detail is all that is necessary.

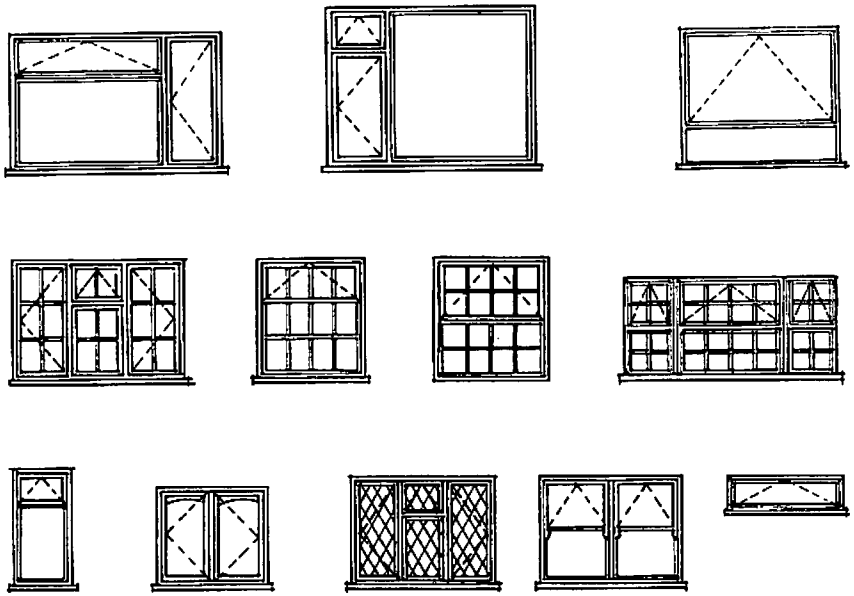
SECTION 5 – DETAILED DESIGN

Windows

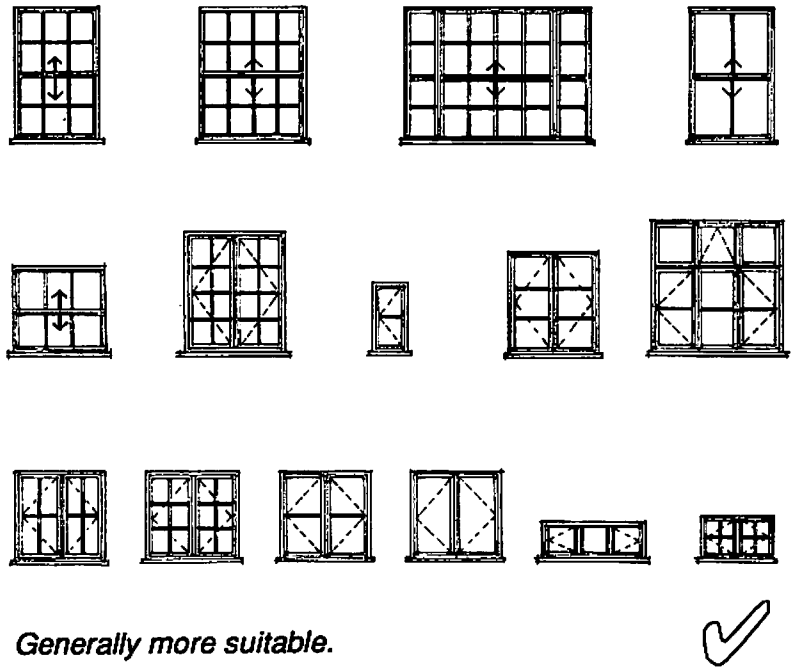


Windows which are too large, badly positioned, of an inappropriate style or poorly proportioned can have a major impact on the overall appearance of a house.

In certain instances careful mixing of window types on new houses can add interest to the overall composition.



Windows – best avoided in traditional areas.



Generally more suitable.

5.2 WINDOWS

The size proportions and position of windows on new buildings must always be very carefully considered. They should be designed in such a way that they relate satisfactorily to not only the form and the architectural style of the new building but also the style and quality of the surrounding buildings.

The attractive appearance of many traditional buildings is in part derived from the vertical proportions of windows and doors acting as a visual "balance" to the horizontal proportions of the building. Furthermore, unlike many new houses, windows are generally not very large and are not too numerous. As a result traditional buildings retain a basic simplicity and an inherent visual strength.

As a general rule therefore, the majority of windows on new developments, especially those located alongside traditional buildings, should be kept reasonably small and have a definite vertical emphasis rather than a horizontal one. They should preferably be vertical sliding sashes or simple side hung casements, with transoms and mullions. Panes of glass should also be kept quite small.

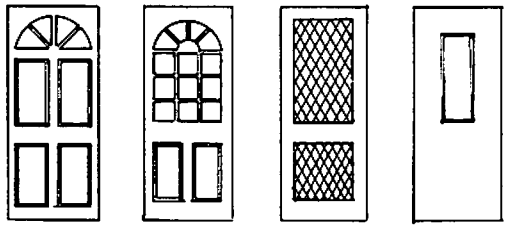
Care should be taken when choosing from the many standard ranges of windows now available, particularly those with top hung opening lights and "Neo-Georgian" styles. This is because in most cases their design has no historical precedent, they are poorly proportioned and the frames and glazing bars have crude, heavy looking profiles.

Although traditional, well detailed bay windows do form part of the established architectural character of the area, modern, badly detailed versions are best avoided.

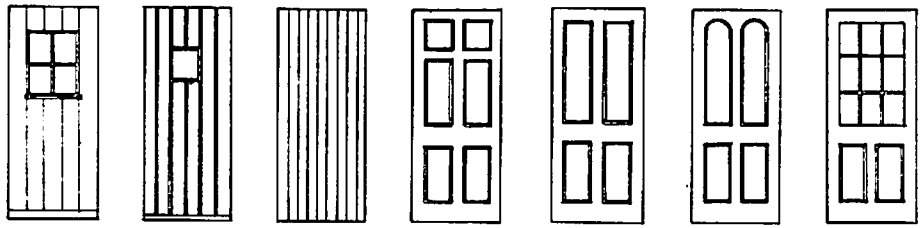
In the many locations within the District which provide a setting with a sensitive character, windows made out of brown stained softwood and hardwood, aluminium or u.p.v.c. will detract from the traditional appearance of the area and will, therefore, be resisted. Furthermore, the techniques of applying false glazing bars to the inside or outside of the glass or inserting them in between the panes of double glazing, always appears incongruous and will also be discouraged.

On certain house designs (e.g. a traditional vernacular style) it may not always be essential to have all the windows matching. As shown on various illustrations throughout this Guide, more than one window type on the same building can sometimes, when carefully considered, actually add interest to and enhance the overall design.

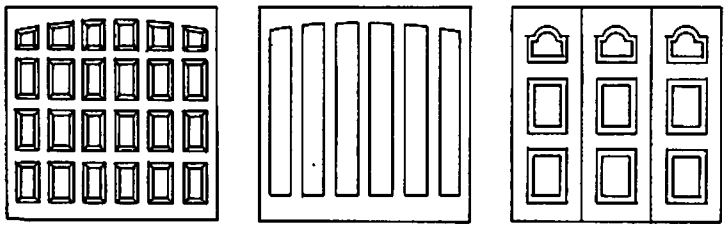
Doors



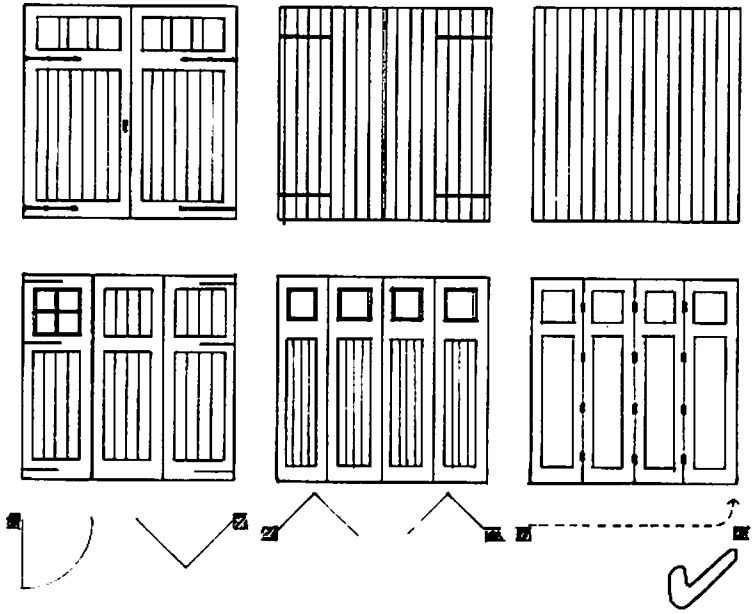
Doors – not recommended.



Doors – generally more suitable.



Garage doors.



5.3 DOORS

Like windows, doors are a very important feature of a building and in most cases provide the visual focal point.

Traditionally, doors were simple designs of vertical boarding or timber panelling, usually without any form of glazing. Sometimes fan lights above the door provided some natural light into the hall. During the 18th and 19th Centuries doors and door surrounds became more flamboyant with local variations of Classical and Gothic styles being produced.

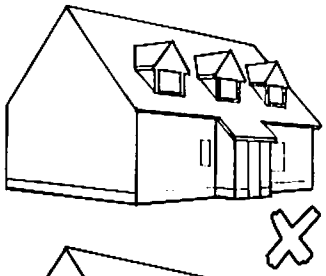
Doors for new buildings should generally be kept relatively simple and unless the design needs to relate to existing Georgian or Victorian buildings alongside rarely would it be justified for very decorative or elaborate doors or door surrounds to be used.

Many of the now widely available "period" doors and surrounds are poor designs based very loosely on historical styles and their use will be discouraged especially in traditional locations (see illustrations).

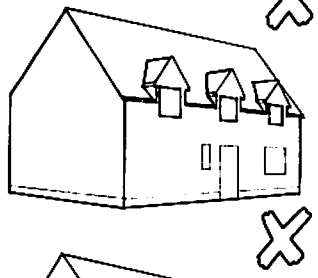
Sliding patio doors can have a disproportionate effect on the fenestration of a house and should therefore, where possible, be restricted to locations where they will not be visible from public areas. In traditional locations and in conservation areas their use will be discouraged. Well designed French windows are a far more suitable alternative.

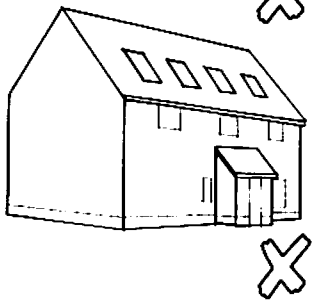
Garage doors, because of their size, can dominate the overall appearance of any new development, especially when houses are designed with integral garages. In almost every instance simple wooden side hinged or horizontal sliding or folding doors are far better than up and over plastic or metal ones. Plain vertical boarding is always preferable to the panelled "Georgian" or "Tudor" garage(!) doors and all the other "period" styles that are currently available. For most designs doors in excess of 2.4m in width should be avoided and double garages should have two separate doors rather than a single wide one.

Dormers and Rooflights

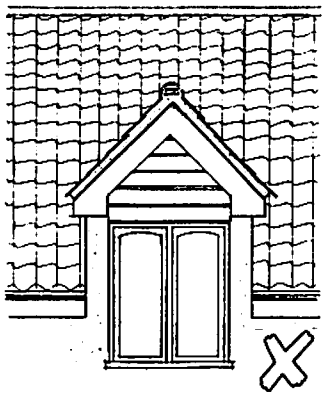


Traditionally, on 1½ storey houses, dormer windows tended to be constructed at wall plate level. Try, therefore to avoid the arrangements shown left.

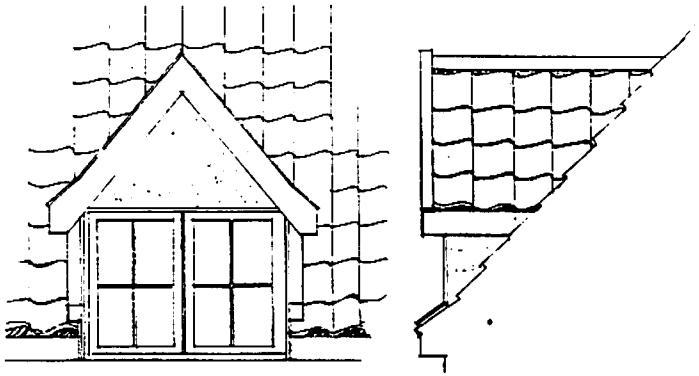




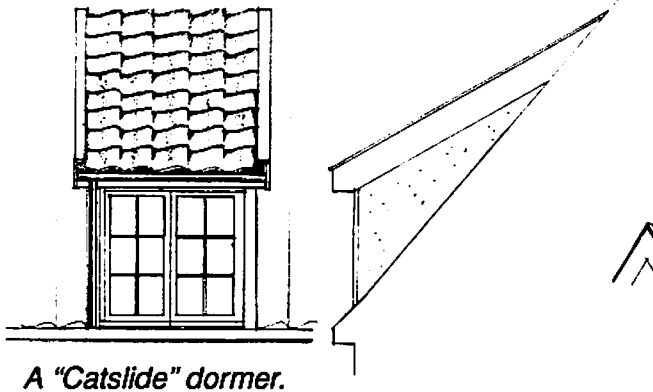
In traditional townscapes sloping rooflights should be discreetly positioned and kept relatively small.



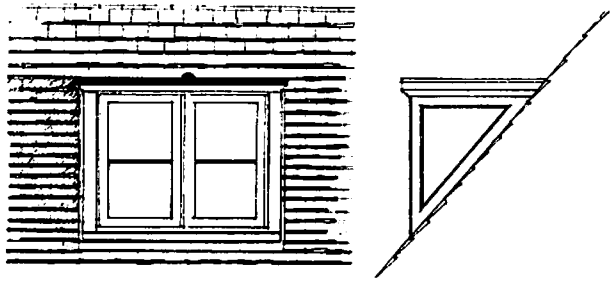
The design and detailing of dormer windows should be very carefully considered.



A traditional gabled dormer.

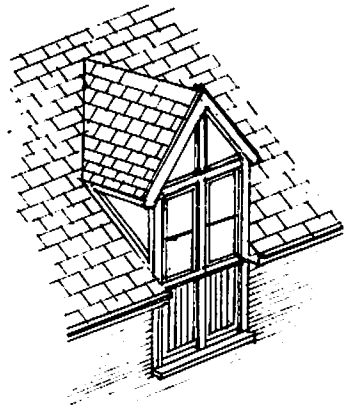


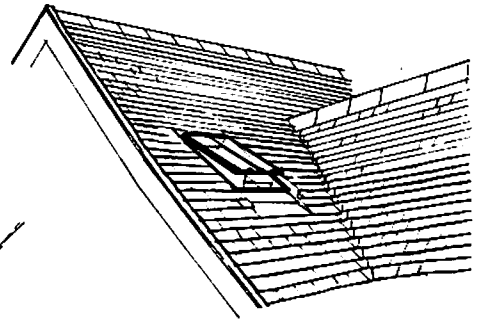
A "Catslide" dormer.



A small flat roofed dormer with lead roof and glazed sides.

A dormer window reflecting a tradtional upper floor access.





A tradtional cast-iron rooflight.

5.4 DORMERS AND ROOFLIGHTS

In order to design new buildings of a suitable form and scale in existing settlements it will often be necessary to make use of the roof space and to incorporate dormer windows into the design. The types which are traditional to the District are the wedge or "cat-slide" and the gabled. Dormers with hips and small leaded flat roofed dormers were also used especially during the 18th and 19th Centuries.

It is important that the location, size and proportions of dormer windows are correct. Generally, they should be kept relatively small and narrow and care should be taken with the detailing of eaves, verges and framing so that they do not appear too heavy or bulky.

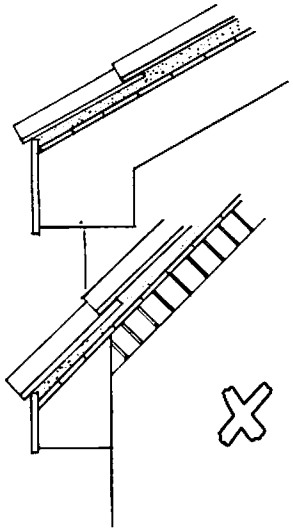
On one and a half storey buildings dormers were traditionally located at wall plate level (i.e. their cills were in line with the eaves). Placing them high up the roof slope or with the eaves halfway up the window should, therefore, be avoided. Furthermore, the roof on a cat-slide dormer should not begin at ridge level. Traditionally, they tended to spring from a point about one-third down the roofslope.

The cheeks of dormers should normally be rendered although they can be glazed and the sides of small dormers can be leaded. The use of horizontal or vertical boarding on dormer windows is not a traditional feature on house roofs but was sometimes used on ancillary extensions and outbuildings and on other timber framed structures.

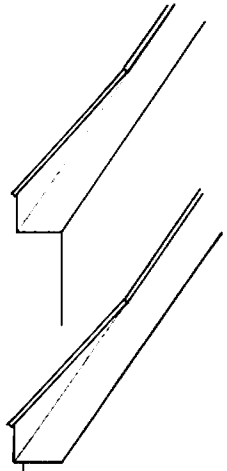
Many traditional farm and industrial buildings together with dwellings with associated workshop spaces, often had a dormer in the roof which provided access to an attic space. In some designs therefore, introducing a similar feature which incorporates some form of glazing can not only provide daylight to the upper floor but can also add a point of interest to the roof of an extension on the side or to the rear of a new house (see illustrations).

Sloping rooflights are appropriate for the more suburban parts of the District but they can be a rather discordant feature in a traditional townscape or on individual buildings in rural areas, especially if they are large or are grouped together. Variations of the Victorian cast-iron rooflight are now available and in certain locations these can prove much more sympathetic than the more modern alternatives.

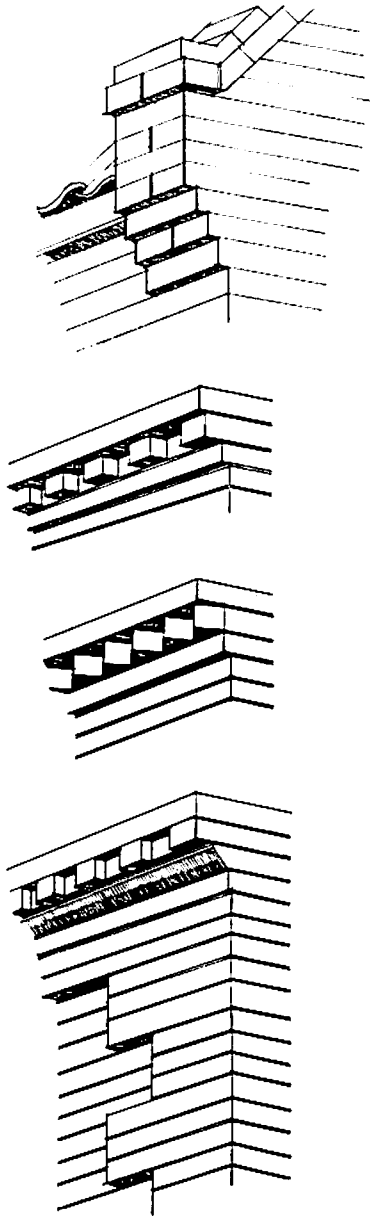
Eaves and Verges



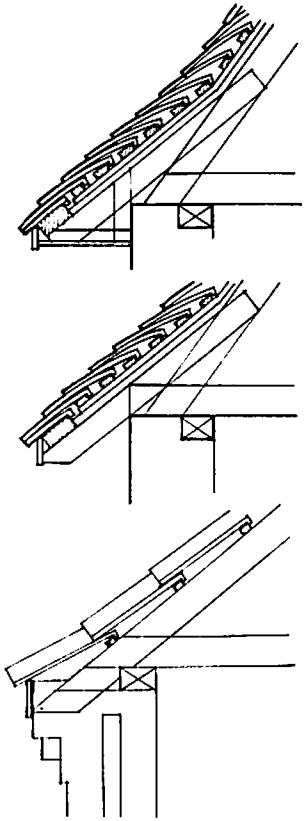
Avoid these modern verge details which often appear crude and bulky.



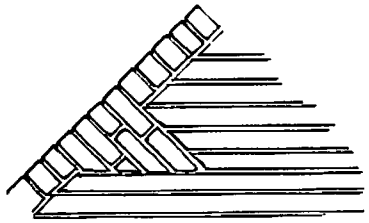
Traditional verge details incorporating timber barge boards and capping pieces.



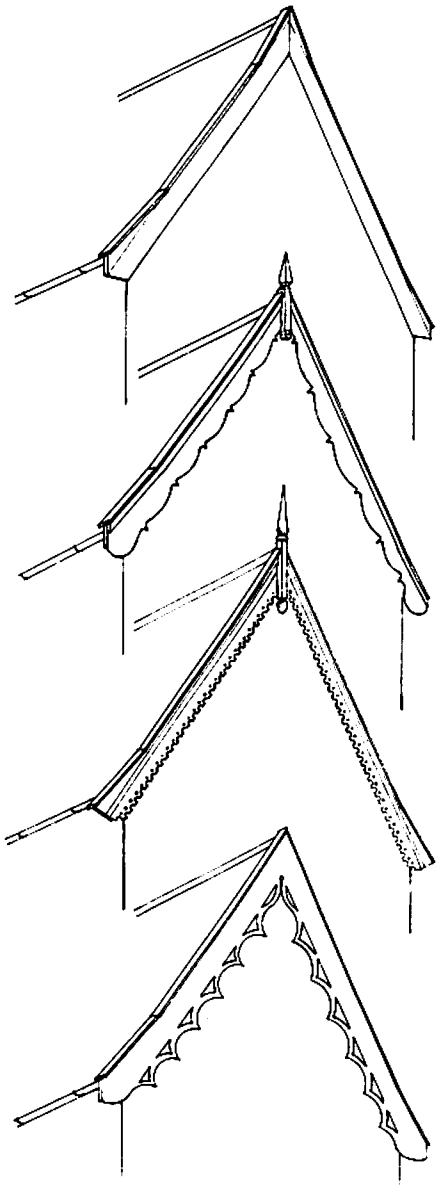
Tradtional brick detailing.



Traditional eaves detailing. Deep facias are avoided.



"Tumbling-in" on a brick parapet gable.



Examples of traditional barge boards.

5.5 EAVES AND VERGES

A significant difference between the appearance of the Districts vernacular buildings and many recently built modern structures is the detailing which is used on the eaves and verges of the roofs of houses and on porches, dormers, garages etc.

Modern construction techniques favour "boxed out" eaves and verges incorporating deep facias and soffits (see illustrations). These, along with the bulky "clubfoot" end to the barge board can appear very heavy and crude.

Traditional detailing, in contrast, was very different. Vernacular builders generally, constructed eaves without a deep fascia and often mounted gutters on metal brackets fixed directly to the wall or on exposed rafter feet. The junction between the roof slope and the walls of the building was, as a result, far less bulky and had a more refined appearance.

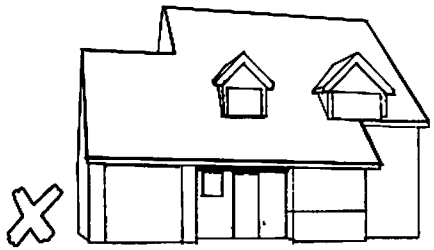
Many roofs were constructed with very little overhang at the eaves. Brick walls were usually corbelled out at the eaves and where a facia was provided it was often fixed directly to the wall. Where eaves did incorporate an overhang, a very elegant eaves line was achieved by laying the last few rows of tiles at a shallower angle using timber sprockets fixed to the rafters (see illustrations opposite). Soffits were then sometimes decorated with wooden dentils, mouldings and other Classical motifs.

The local traditional verge detail involved barge boards fixed almost flush with the face of the gable wall, masking the edge of the tiles. This was topped with a timber capping piece which overlapped the tiles. Sometimes decorative barge boards were used and these form an attractive feature on many traditional buildings in the District.

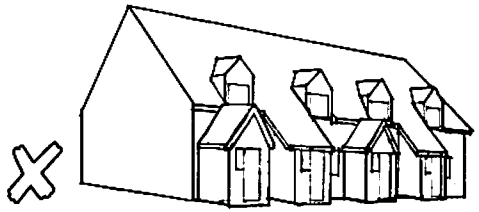
The use of these details on new developments will be encouraged, as would the use of brick parapet gables, although it is important that the materials, detailing and workmanship is of the right quality. A concrete coping used on a parapet wall in place of the traditional brick or special, clay coping for example, would look wholly inappropriate.

Care should also be taken with specifying proprietary dry verge and cloak tiling systems on verges because they are not a traditional detail, they can lack refinement and all too often just appear clumsy.

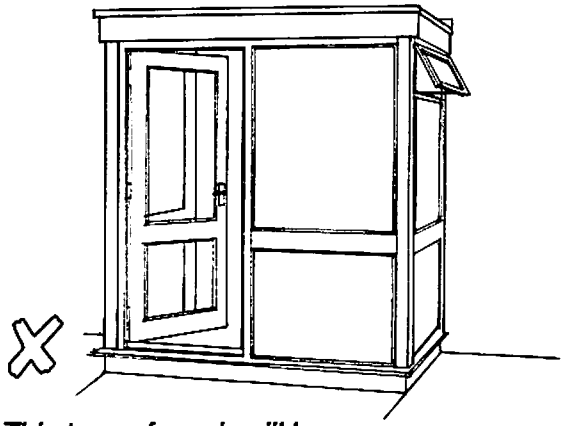
Porches, Canopies and Door Surrounds



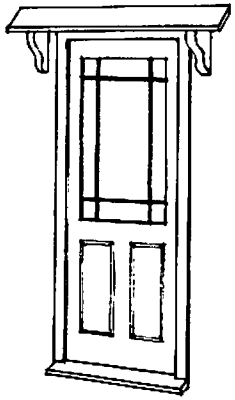
A porch designed in this manner creates a building with a subtractive appearance.



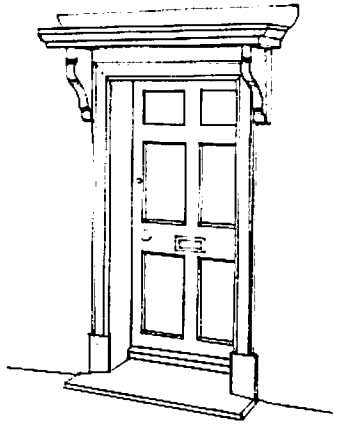
These porches are too large for this small terrace.



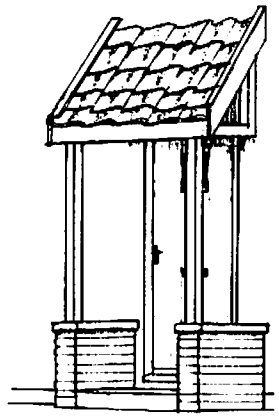
This type of porch will be inappropriate in many areas.



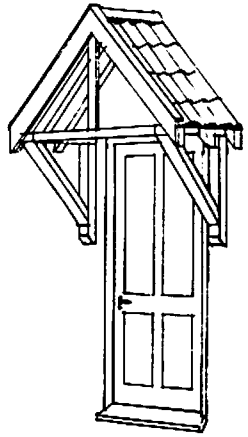
A prentice board canopy.



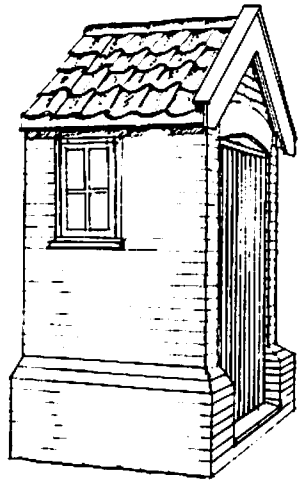
A traditional door surround.



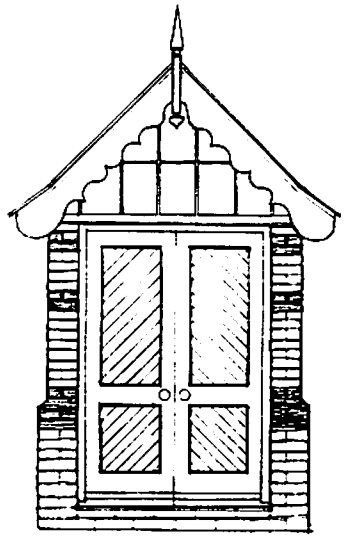
An open lean-to canopy.



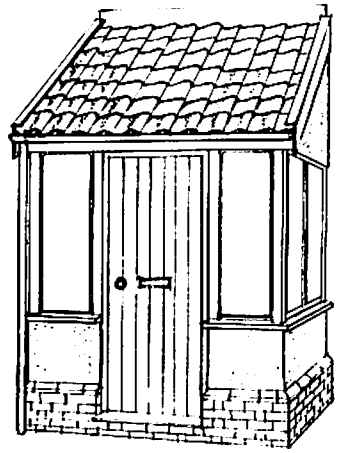
Gabled canopy.



A simple enclosed brick gabled porch.



An enclosed porch with glazing above the doors.



An enclosed lean-to porch.

5.6 PORCHES, CANOPIES AND DOOR SURROUNDS

Most early Suffolk timber framed houses (and many simple cottages) were originally built without porches. Porches which were part of the original design of a house or those which were added later were generally very simple open gabled or lean-to roofs supported either on posts or brackets fixed to the wall of the building. Sometimes a small enclosed porch was constructed.

Historically, some very large, grand and decorative porches were erected on buildings, especially those designed in the Classical or Gothic styles. However, many of these formed an integral part of the overall design of the building and were not added on later as an afterthought.

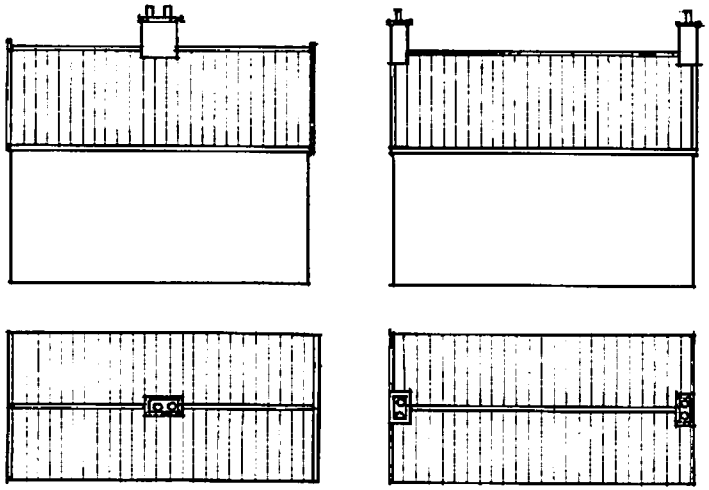
Porches tend to be a very prominent feature on any building and therefore they have to be designed with great care. In order to reinforce the local building tradition in the area, a recessed draught lobby located within the house is often more preferable to a projecting porch or canopy.

As a general rule, where external porches are erected on new buildings they should be kept small and simple and relate to the style of the building to which they are attached. A traditional open canopy is often the most suitable alternative. Modern, enclosed porches or "pseudo-Georgian" porticos, both of which are often crudely detailed, should be avoided, especially in areas which contain a predominance of traditional buildings.

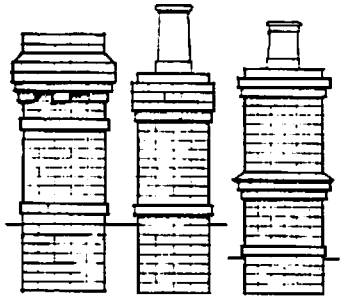
Porches and canopies which are designed as a continuation of the main house or garage roof creates a building with a subtractive form which invariably looks wrong and will, therefore, be discouraged. Porch roofs should be visually separated from both (see illustrations).

Painted timber door surrounds can form attractive features on new houses but they should be appropriately traditional in style, properly detailed and kept relatively simple.

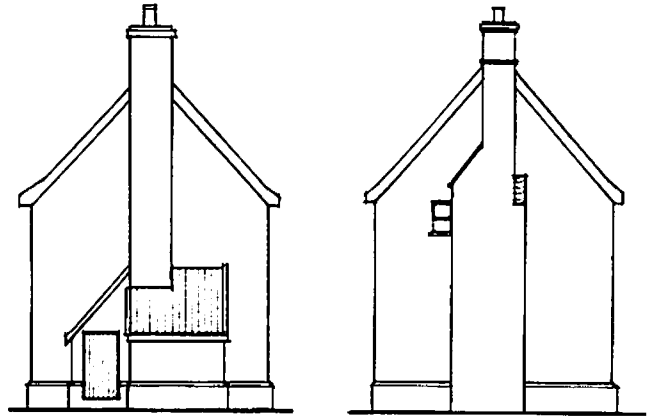
Chimneys



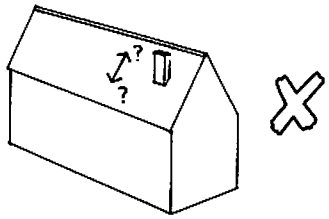
Chimneys should be placed central to the ridge or at one or both ends as show above.



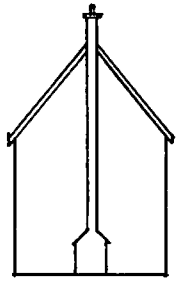
Corbelled brickwork on chimneys helps throw off moisture and adds interest to the design.



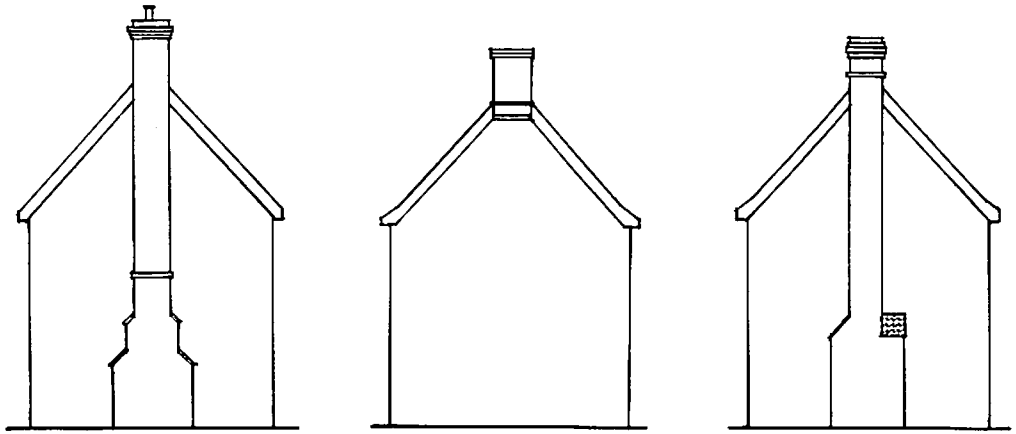
Useful storage space can sometimes be created by incorporating carefully designed external chimney stacks.



Chimneys in the roof slope should be avoided where possible.



Single flue chimney stacks often appear too thin and weak.



Appropriately proportioned and detailed chimneys can enhance the appearance of buildings and their surroundings.

5.7 CHIMNEYS

Chimneys are an extremely important feature of traditional buildings and townscapes and the designers of new buildings are strongly encouraged to incorporate appropriately proportioned and detailed chimney stacks into their proposals.

Traditionally, most chimneys were placed at the ridge, frequently at one or both ends. The stack usually contained two or more flues so it was a substantial structure with a rectangular plan form.

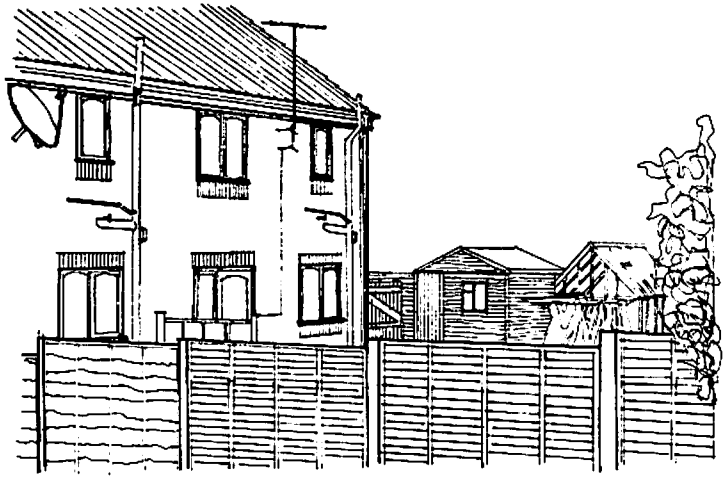
Where chimneys are proposed for new buildings it is usually preferable for them to follow the traditional form. They should be located centrally on the ridge line of the roof rather than on one side of the roof slope. As single flue chimney stacks usually appear too thin and weak looking it is better to thicken the construction, perhaps by having a second flue in the stack to serve the central heating boiler.

On gable ends the chimneys should be placed at right angles to the roof. Along the roof it is preferable for the chimney to be parallel to the ridge (see diagrams).

Chimney stacks can either be located within the gable wall or project beyond the outside face. If expressed externally the stack should have a substantial base which tapers using staggered or sloping brickwork or should have a tile capping. Where the stack is located within the gable wall the traditional detail is for barge boards not to overlap the chimney, instead the chimney would corbel out slightly to mask the ends of the barge boards. (See illustrations opposite).

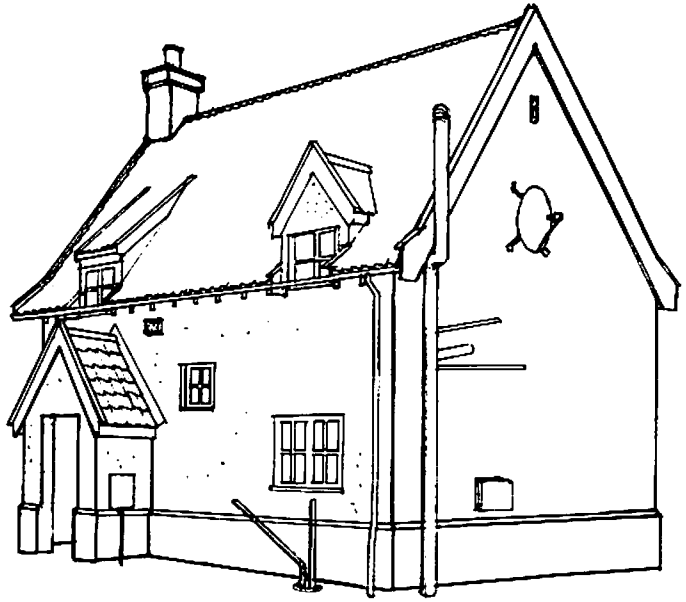
Corbelled brick detailing at the top of the chimney stack helps throw off the moisture and prevents damp penetration.

Sometimes, useful external and internal storage space can be created by constructing large external chimney stacks.



Left: *External pipework, meter boxes and various other unco-ordinated features can have a discordant effect on any new housing development.*

Below: *Such features in particular can substantially undermine the appearance of houses which reflect the traditional architectural character of the area.*



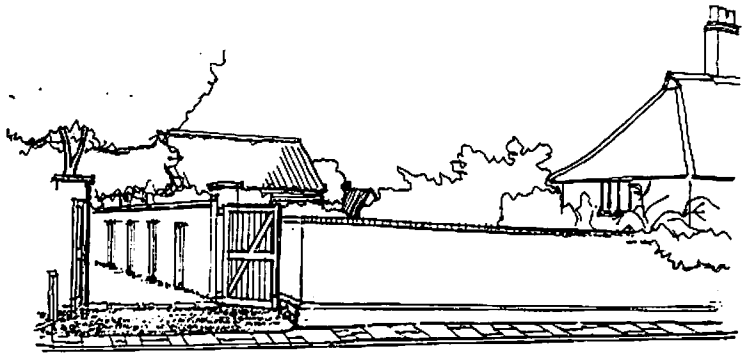
5.8 MISCELLANEOUS DETAILS

External pipework, balanced flues, satellite dishes, meter boxes etc., are the sort of incidental features which can often spoil otherwise attractively designed new buildings.

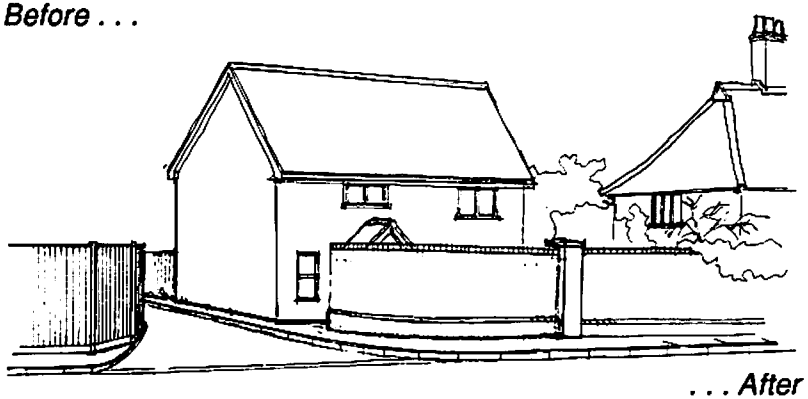
On new houses all pipework, apart from rainwater gutters and downpipes should run inside the building and fortunately alternatives now exist to the ugly detail of soil vent pipes terminating above the roof line.

Balanced flues, should be restricted to the private side of the building, as should gas supply pipes. Meter boxes can be a real visual intrusion especially on small terraced or semi-detached properties. On all new buildings consideration should, therefore, be given at an early stage in the design process to providing meters in locations other than on the main elevations. In the more sensitive locations within the District the standard plastic meter box on the public faces of buildings will not be acceptable.

SECTION 6 – LANDSCAPE FEATURES



Before . . .



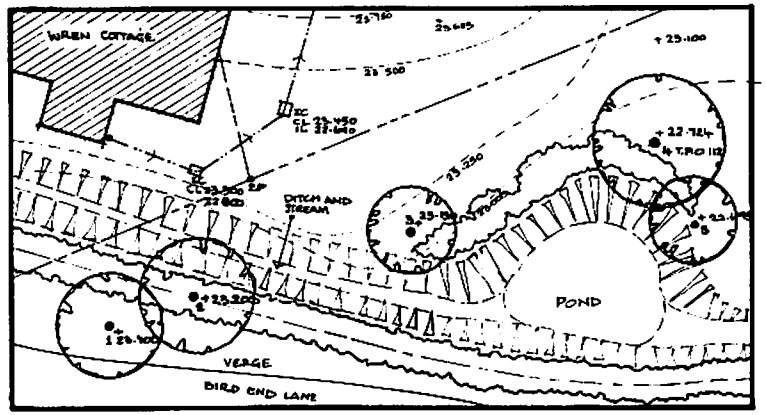
. . . After

Above: *New development in towns and villages can not only involve the loss of important open spaces but also features such as old out-buildings, walls, gates, traditional surface treatments etc., all of which contribute to the established character of the area.*

Before . . .

. . . After

The traditional character and appearance of many rural villages can be irrevocably damaged by inappropriate new developments and loss of important open spaces and other landscape features (as shown above).



A proper survey of a potential development site should always accompany any planning application.

6.1 SPACES BETWEEN BUILDINGS

There is a great contrast between the more urban settlements of Suffolk Coastal and many of its villages which have a more open, rural character. The urban areas are close knit with the majority of buildings in very close proximity to one another. In these locations boundary walls, railings, gates etc., together with the traditional surface treatments of roads, driveways and footpaths, all combine to make an important contribution to the character of the area. Furthermore, individual trees that have matured take on a particular significance.

Those areas with a more open nature are characterised by a generous feeling of space with the landscape dominating rather than the buildings. Many of the Districts villages fall within this latter category and although sometimes there may be a tight group of buildings around the village green or street, many comprise buildings set in quite large plots. In these locations the quality and character of the spaces between the buildings (i.e. the hedges, banks, trees and gardens) are as important as the buildings themselves.

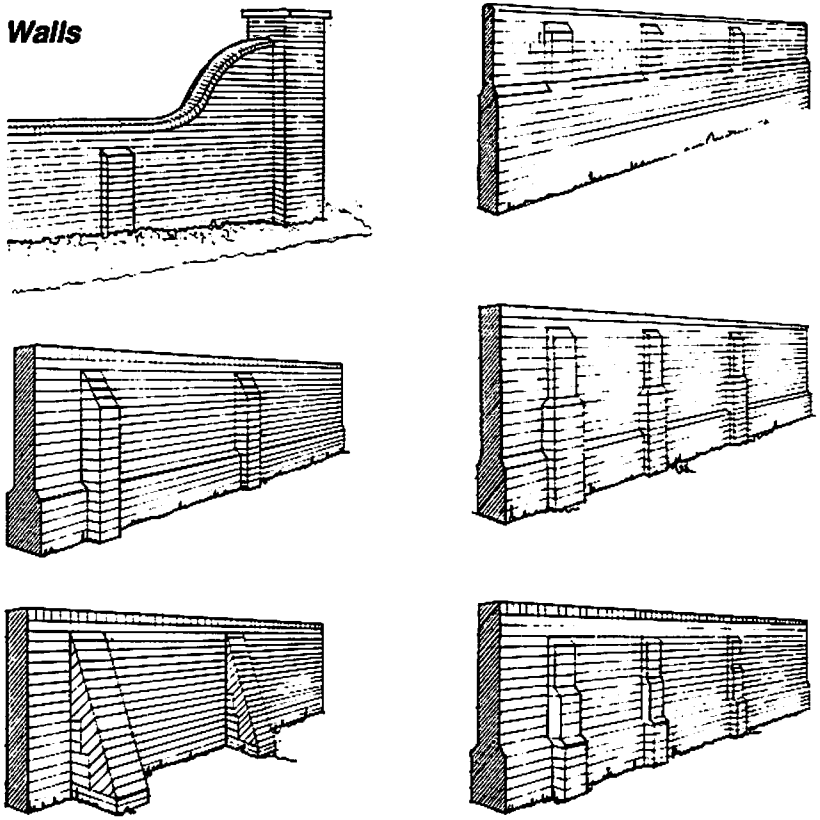
In both towns and villages, therefore, every effort should be made to protect and enhance not only the spaces between buildings but also the structures and landscape features which occupy them.

Unfortunately many of these spaces have been lost or have been irrevocably damaged by new developments, by inappropriate change or just through neglect.

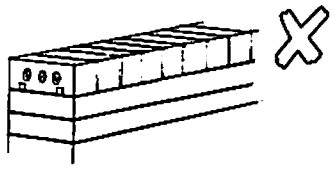
In order for new development proposals to be acceptable, therefore, not only should sufficient regard be paid to the retention of existing important spaces, structures and landscape features, but they should also be designed to incorporate new elements which will complement and enhance the essential character of the area.

A proper survey of a development site should always be carried out and accompany any planning applications submitted. (See Section 8). Site plans "as proposed" should show all the changes which are going to take place on and around the development site and both hard and landscaping schemes should always form an integral part of the overall design for the site and not just be regarded as a cosmetic treatment, added as an afterthought.

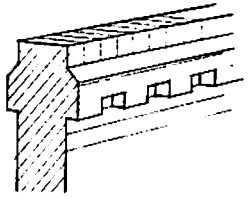
Walls



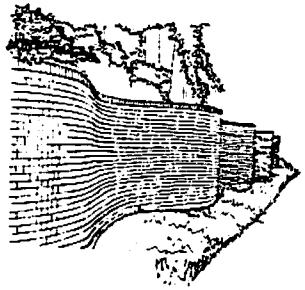
Piers in walls should be constructed as buttresses unless they are designed as a focal point or mark an entrance.



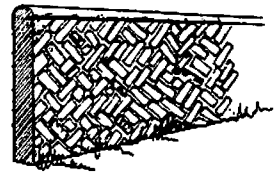
Terminating the end of a wall like this must be avoided!



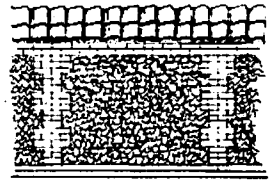
Traditional brick corbelling at the top of a wall.



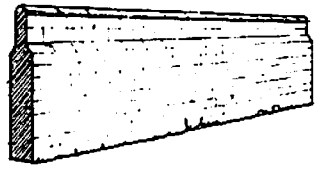
"Crinkle-Crankle" or serpentine wall.



A random wall of brick and flint with a clay semi-circular coping.

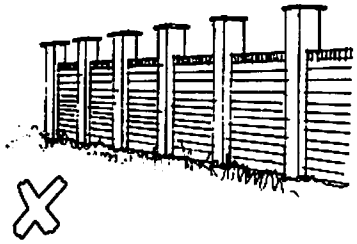


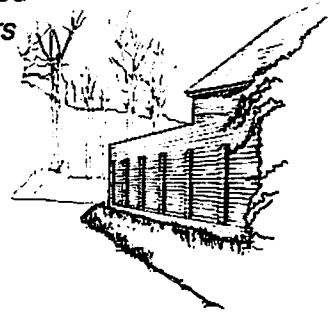
A tiled coping to a flint wall with brick dressings.



A simple traditional wall with cant bricks and a clay ridged coping.

Stepping a wall down a slope has a jagged appearance, as does too many brick piers projecting above a wall (below).





A wall which follows the slope of the ground can form an attractive feature.

6.2 WALLS

Where old brick or flint walls exist on or around a potential development site every effort should be made to retain them. Not only are they an important and attractive feature in the District's towns and villages but they are usually of historic significance. They can, therefore, greatly assist in ensuring that any new buildings constructed alongside them will be successfully integrated into the existing street scene.

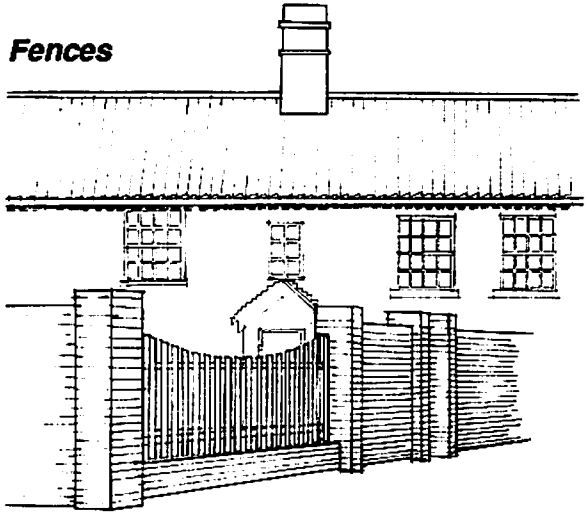
The majority of the old walls which survive in the area were constructed from the local soft red brick and many are quite substantial structures. Random walls made up of random coursing of brick and flint are also common, as are flint walls with brick dressings. A number of "Crinkle Crankle" or "Serpentine" walls, which comprise a series of curves on plan to provide stability, were also constructed. The surviving gault or white brick walls mostly date from the late 18th and early 19th Centuries.

As well as the type of material used, the detailing, colour, texture, bonding and pointing are all important considerations when designing new walls. Traditional features should be incorporated and where possible the use of plinths, piers, corbelling and buttresses will all add interest. Various traditional brick bonds are appropriate (stretcher bond can often look wrong) and because of its colour and weathering properties pointing should ideally be in lime cement mortar. Joints should be relatively thin and finished flush.

How the top of any wall is finished is particularly important. Traditionally, walls were capped with a simple brick on edge detail or with specially formed semi circular or ridged clay brick copings. A concrete coping to a flint or a brick wall, due to its colour, texture and weathering properties can be inappropriate while a tile creasing was not traditionally used in the area and can appear fussy. The use of engineering bricks, including cant and bull nosed bricks, due to their colour and texture can sometimes also appear unsympathetic. Bricks used as copings laid in such a way that bedding holes are on an exposed face look particularly untidy.

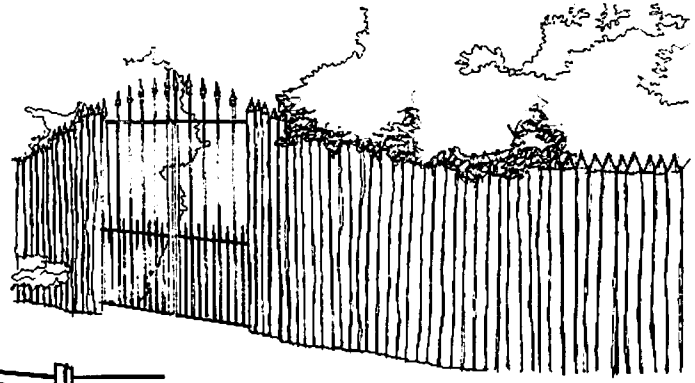
Traditionally, piers in walls were constructed as buttresses and did not project above the top unless they formed focal points or marked an entrance. In both instances they were designed as substantial structures. Similarly, most walls which were built on sloping sites did not step down at the top at closely spaced intervals because they appeared jagged and incomplete. Instead they either remained level, with the height increasing as the ground sloped or they stepped down by incorporating substantial piers which were spaced well apart. Sometimes they were designed with a graceful angled step or curve every so often and in certain instances they were actually built on the slope. (See illustrations).

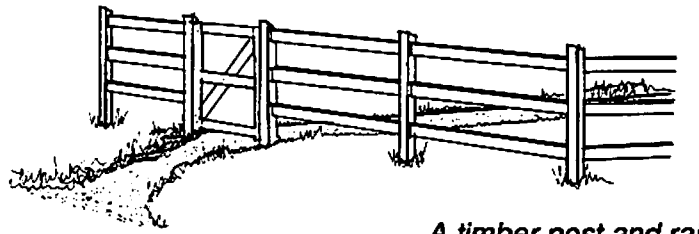
Fences



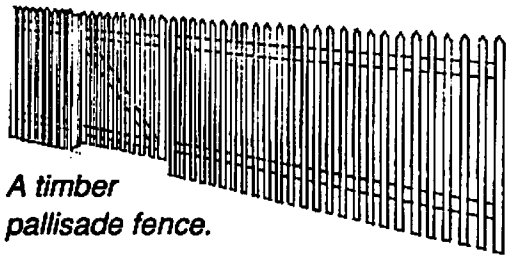
Brick walls and a timber pallisade fence can form an attractive combination.

A fence of closely spaced cleft chestnut pailings or split logs on timber posts and rails can be appropriate in rural locations.

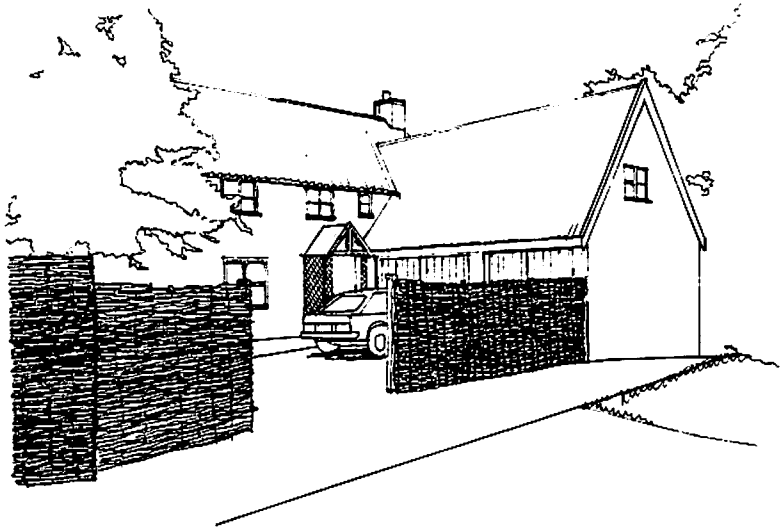




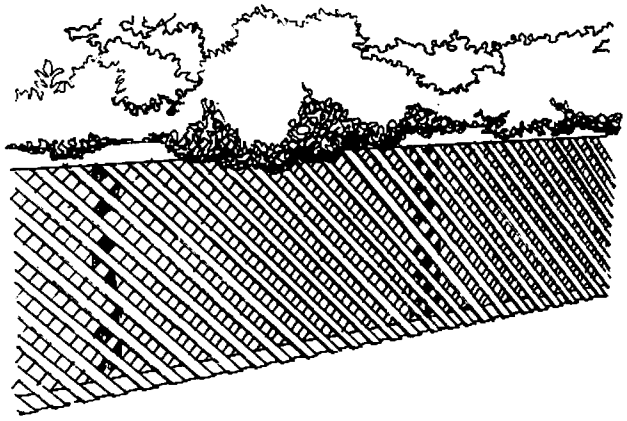
A timber post and rail fence (painting this type of fence should be avoided).



A timber pallisade fence.



Woven wattle fences.



A proprietary fence of diagonal timber battens can in time form a complete visual barrier when used in conjunction with climbers, shrubs or hedging plants.

6.3 FENCES

No matter how well an individual building or group of buildings are designed and finished the whole effect can be ruined by inappropriate external works, and fences in particular, which are often put up by individual occupiers, can be especially discordant.

Although they provide a relatively cheap means of achieving the desired privacy, many types of fences now commonly available are, for visual reasons, unsuitable for prominent locations in towns and villages, or in the open countryside.

Traditionally, in the more urban situations, walls were constructed to provide privacy and to divide one property from another. In villages and more rural areas hedges were the norm. Fences tended to be restricted to the use of simple timber palisade structures around front gardens and post and rails in rural areas where they defined boundaries or were used to restrict the movement of animals.

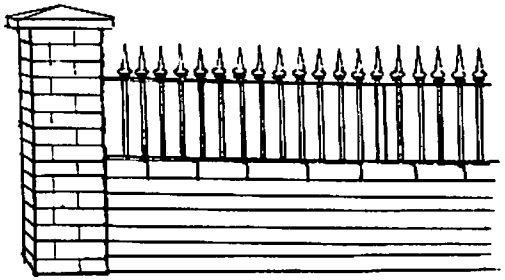
In new developments the use of fencing should be very carefully considered. Timber palisade (or picket) fencing is the most appropriate. Although not a complete visual or security barrier, it does mark a boundary and deter encroachment in a very pleasing manner. Traditionally, palisade fences were often given a white painted finish. The use of woven wattle fences will also be encouraged, especially in villages as they have a rural character and are much less obtrusive than solid timber structures such as a close boarded fence.

Timber post and rail or simple post and wire fences come in many forms and are satisfactorily used for field and roadside boundaries in the countryside. Most are acceptable in rural areas, however, painted finishes (particularly white) should be avoided. A simple fence either of cleft chestnut or split logs supported on wooden rails, especially when used in conjunction with a newly planted hedge (which would mature and eventually replace the fence), can also prove successful.

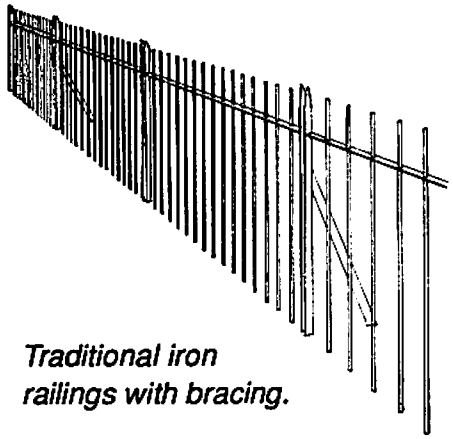
Woven and lapped slatted timber fence panels are cheap and readily available and provide effective visual screening. However, they are not very attractive, do not weather very well, are easily damaged and are difficult to repair. They are, therefore, wholly unsuitable for public areas and other prominent locations and are particularly inappropriate in the traditional parts of both towns and villages.

Concrete posts and chainlink fences should be used with great care as they can not only look out of place in the countryside but can also mar an otherwise attractive street scene in both towns and villages.

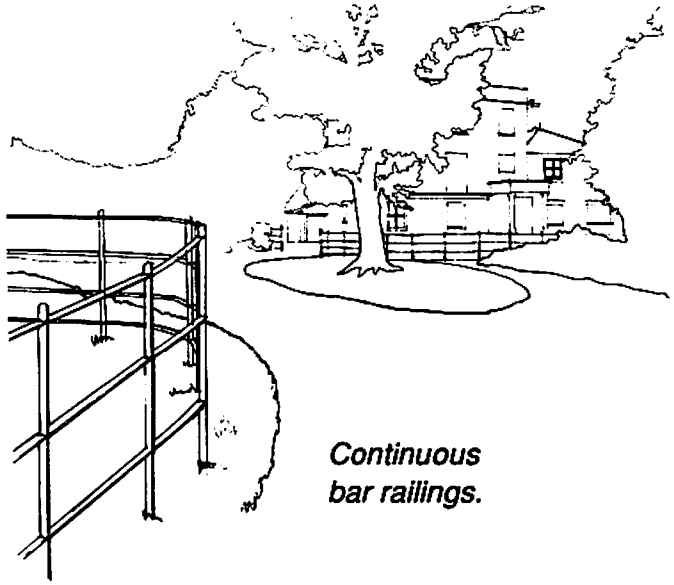
Railings



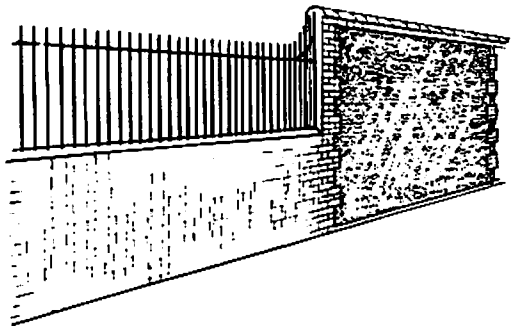
Ornamental railings used in conjunction with a brick plinth and piers (piers should be spaced well apart).



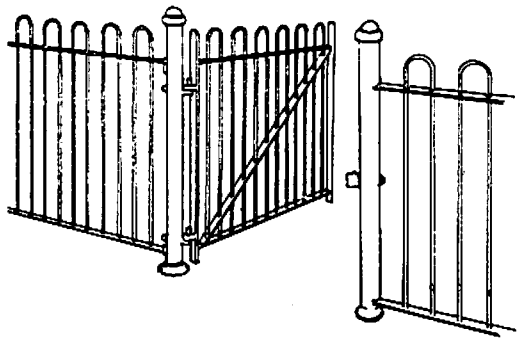
Traditional iron railings with bracing.



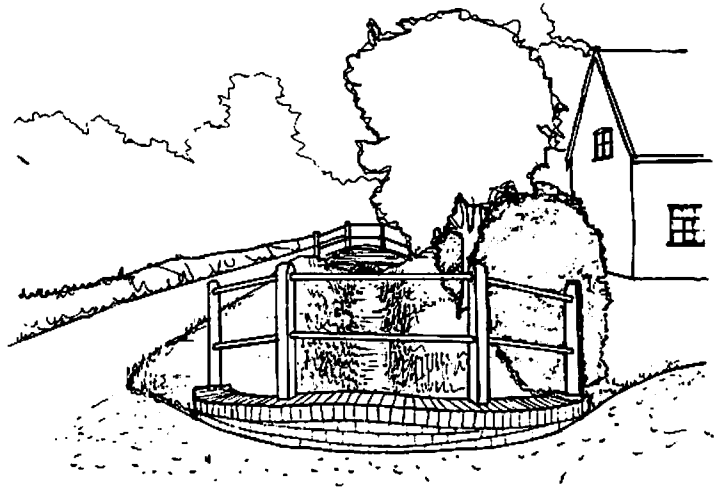
Continuous bar railings.



An attractive combination of simple metal railings and brick and flint walls.



Simple bow topped railings.



Tubular rails supported on posts.

6.4 METAL RAILINGS

Metal railings can be used to enhance the streetscape in both urban and rural locations. Houses, churchyards, formal parks and other sites in towns and villages, before the war, were enclosed with metal railings often used in conjunction with brick.

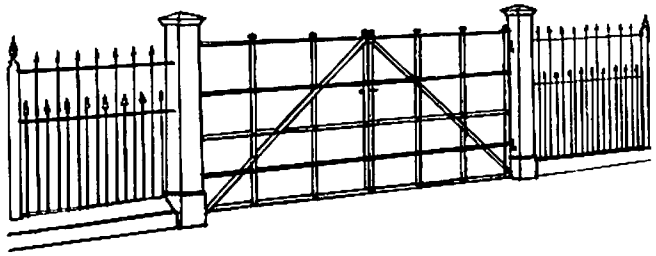
Care should be used to ensure that the right sort of new railings are used in particular locations. On the one hand over decorative designs should normally be avoided, whereas, conversely, some railings can appear too utilitarian (for example the type of steel railings commonly used as safety barriers at pedestrian crossings).

On new developments, when using a combination of railings with brick plinths and piers, unless it is desirable to match existing old railings, designs should be kept relatively simple in order to avoid them appearing over elaborate or too fussy. Furthermore, brick piers should be constructed as substantial structures and be well spaced apart. Where the railings require bracing the use of metal angle brackets is preferable to having too many weak looking brick piers.

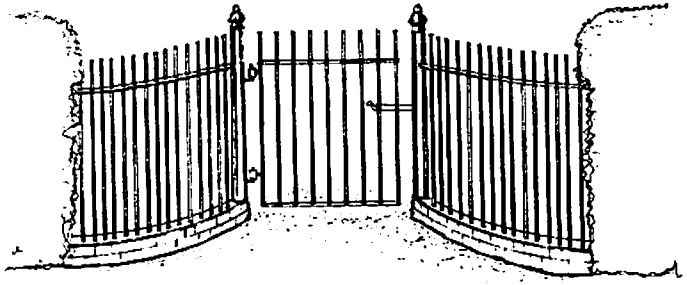
In villages and the more rural locations simple continuous bar, or tubular rails (which are usually supported by wooden or concrete posts) can be very effective. The former is traditionally found around large country houses and parkland, whilst the latter (painted white when concrete posts are used) was erected as a guard rail on a bridge, along a stream or as a simple handrail alongside steps.

A timber post and chain barrier has been used in a small number of locations to give emphasis to a village sign, war memorial or village green. The use of these for other locations should be avoided.

Gates

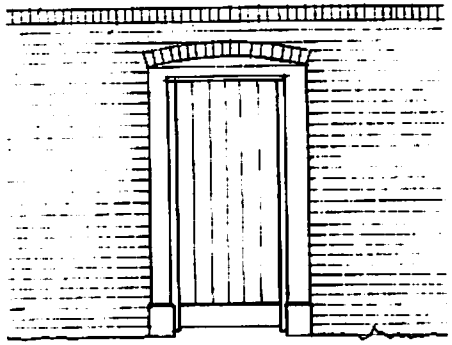


Above: Attractively designed metal gates, posts and railings.

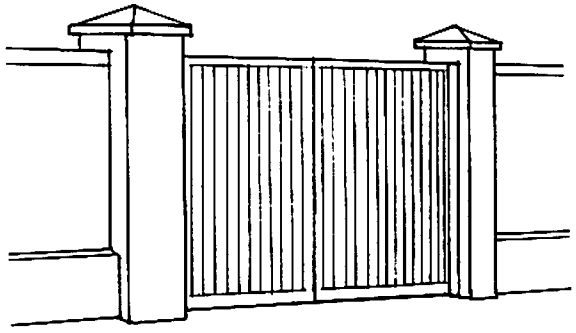


A simple vertically boarded gate in a brick wall.

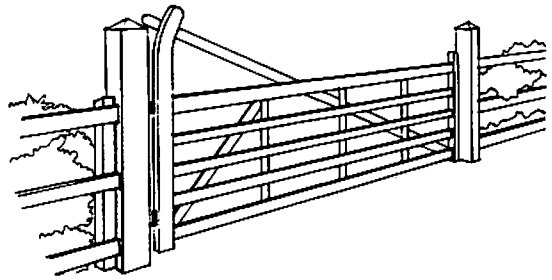
Below: *An opening in a high brick wall with a vertically boarded gate hung on a heavy timber frame.*



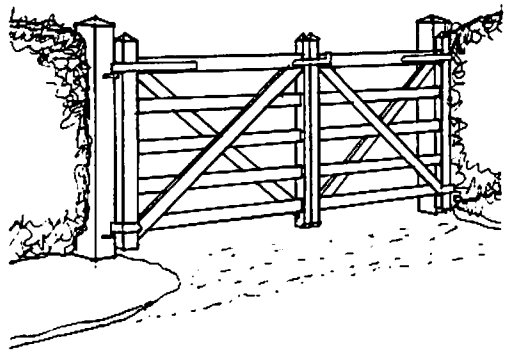
Left: *A simple metal gate flanked by curved railings and hedges make an attractive entrance.*



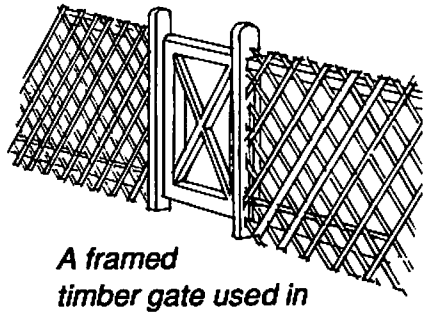
A traditional solution to providing a vehicular access through a wall.



Traditional five bar gate.



A pair of cross-braced timber gates.



A framed timber gate used in conjunction with trellis.

6.5 GATES

Traditionally, before the 19th Century, most gates, whether in walls, hedges, railings or fences, were plain and practical.

The more expensive decorative gates tended to mark the entrance to the larger or more important buildings. As a result they were quite substantial objects constructed out of heavy wood or metal.

Today, there are many decorative metal gates on the market, however, the vast majority of these are very lightweight and often appear insubstantial. As with railings, therefore, over-decorative metal gates are best avoided unless they are appropriately designed for their context and the buildings they serve. The more simple designs are almost always more successful.

Where double or single gates are located within high brick walls they would normally be constructed with plain, flush, vertically boarded timber, ledged and braced, with a painted finish.

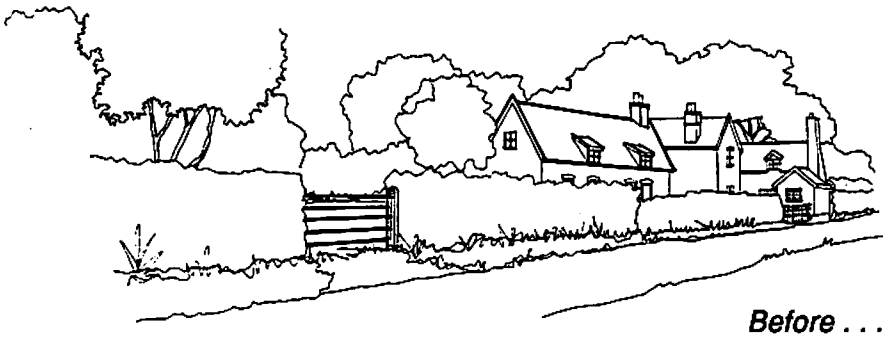
Simple wooden palisade, boarded or framed gates, as well as variations of the traditional wooden "five-bar" gate, are all rural in character and are particularly suited to village locations.

The design of gate supports is just as important visually, as the gates themselves. If decorative metal gates are used then the design of the gate posts should be complementary. In fact it is actually better to combine decorative posts with relatively plain gates, rather than the other way round.

Masonry piers which flank tall or wide gates should appear as large, solid structures. A 225mm brick pier, for example, will almost always look far too thin and weak.

SECTION 6 – LANDSCAPE FEATURES

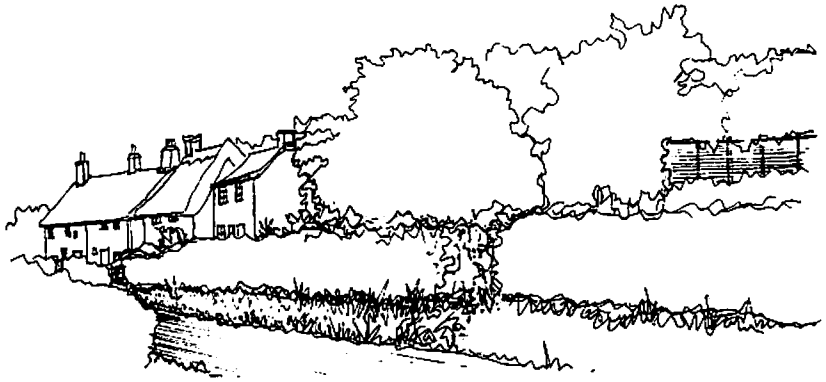
Hedges



Before . . .

. . . After

The removal of a mature hedgerow around and fronting a development site can have a disastrous effect on the appearance of the street scene and the character of the area generally, as the illustrations above and right show.



Before . . .

. . . After

6.6 HEDGES

In both settlements and the countryside generally, hedges play an extremely important role in establishing the character of the District. Their contribution is often taken for granted and sometimes it is not until hedgerows are removed that it is realized just how significant a feature they were in the landscape or in the street scene.

Many hedgerows are very old and although a considerable number were planted during the 18th Century some are even older than that. In all the attractive villages of the District, mature hedges are an essential characteristic and as well as being of value visually, they are also important in ecological terms providing an important habitat for plants and wildlife.

Although primarily associated with the countryside, certain types of hedges can also make appropriate boundaries in towns. The type of hedge, in fact, often helps to determine the character of an area. For example, the extensive use of hawthorn hedging is typically "rural", whilst some evergreen hedges, for example, laurel and leylandii are overtly suburban and can appear out of place in villages or the open countryside.

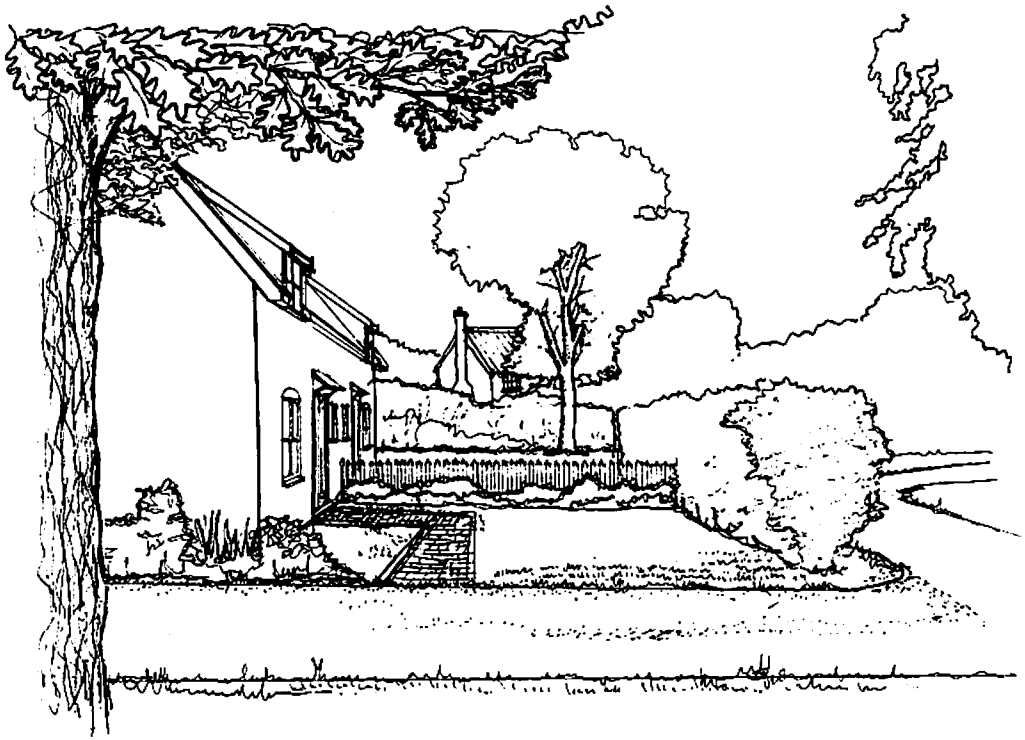
It should not be overlooked that it has taken a number of years for an existing hedge comprising indigenous species to mature and the decision to remove it should be very carefully considered, especially as mature hedgerows go a long way in ensuring that new buildings blend in easily with the existing street scene.

Hedge planting to define boundaries on new developments is in most cases far more preferable to fencing or the "open plan" layouts which have been fashionable in the past few decades. Where an "instant" screen is seen as being essential, planting a hedge in conjunction with a fence should always be considered because while the fence will deteriorate the hedge will mature and eventually replace it.

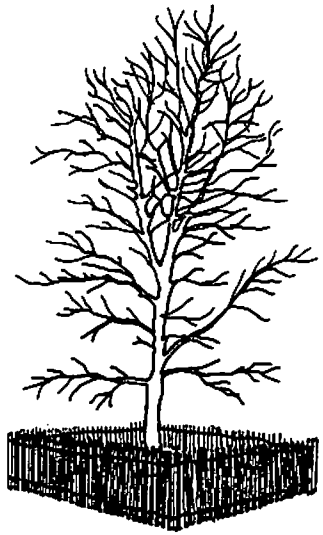
Advice on hedge planting and maintenance, and the choice of species for particular locations, is available from the District Council's Landscape Officer.

SECTION 6 – LANDSCAPE FEATURES

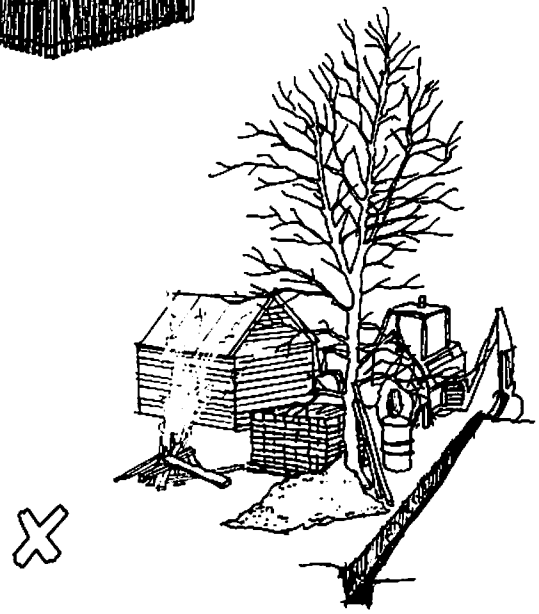
Trees



Existing trees can form attractive focal points on and around development sites and their retention will greatly assist in ensuring that new buildings blend in easily with their surroundings.



Trees should be adequately protected during the construction process.



6.7 TREES

Trees can take a very long time to mature and existing trees on development sites should not only be seen as being of value in visual and amenity terms but should often also be regarded as commercial assets. This is because when development takes place they have a significant softening effect and can form an attractive focal point for what could otherwise be stark new building forms.

However, it is vital that adequate consideration is given to accommodating trees at the design stage, and it is strongly recommended that a qualified Arboriculturalist or Landscape Architect is involved in the process. Firstly, a proper tree survey should always be carried out. (See pages 70 and 71). Following that a decision then has to be made about which trees are be retained and this should involve keeping as many healthy specimens as is practicable. Careful consideration should be given to smaller, immature trees because they could form important future specimens. Trees in boundary hedges should be retained because they also help to visually enclose and soften the impact of new developments.

Site layouts should be drawn up so that there is as little disruption to the ground around trees as possible. Service trenches, foundations for buildings, walls and fences, as well as hard surfacing should not be located under the canopy spread of any tree. Driveways and parking areas which are close to existing trees should be constructed with a permeable surface.

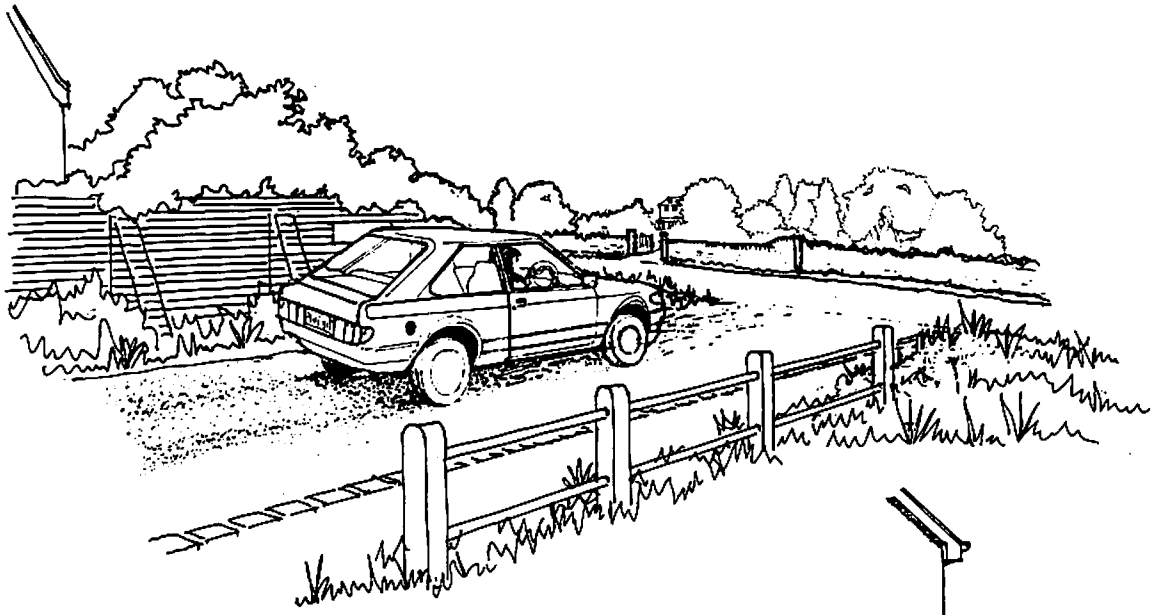
Where buildings and other structures are to be sited alongside trees, provision should be made for incorporating special foundations so that roots can be bridged where necessary. Trees to be retained will have to be adequately protected during the construction process, usually involving fencing around the canopy spread of the tree and ensuring that materials, equipment, spoil etc., is not stored within the fenced off area.

New tree planting should always be considered as a long term measure in order not only to reinforce the existing but to eventually replace it. Soil conditions, together with the predominant species that already exists in the area are always important factors to consider when choosing types of tree for a landscaping scheme.

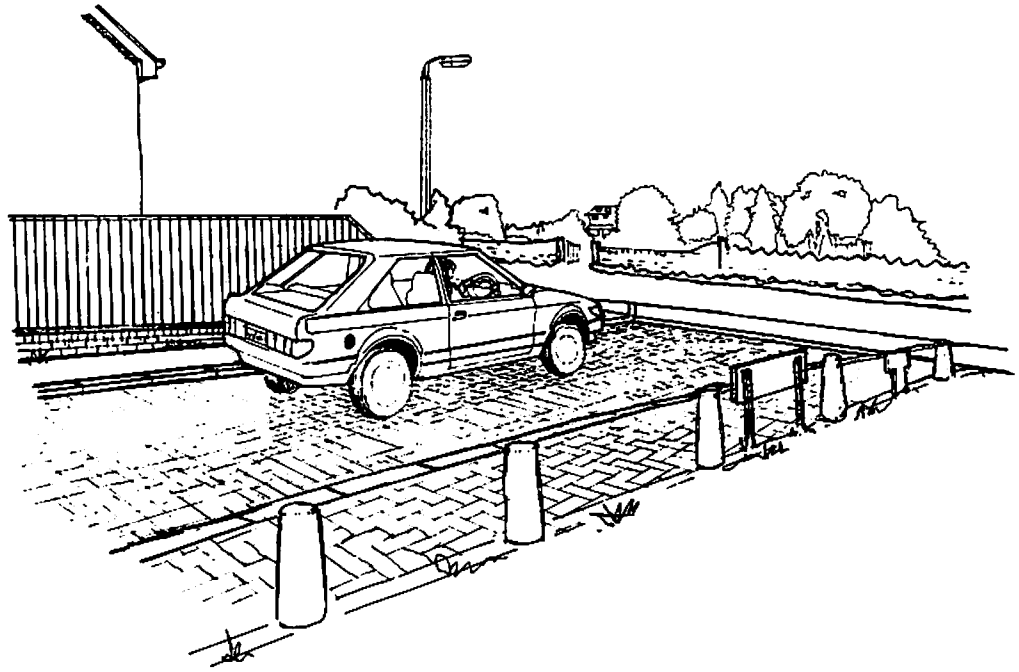
Consideration should be given to the future growth of trees so that houses and gardens are not going to be overshadowed and damage to foundations, walls and roofs is not going to be a possibility. Large woodland trees such as Oak, Beech and Lime should only be planted where sufficient space exists for them to mature. Planting a particular species of tree (Birch, Alder or Yew for example) in groups or clumps can prove very attractive and can often provide more of an impact in the shorter term than individual specimens dotted around a development site.

BS 5837: 1991 "Guide for Trees in relation to construction" provides some very useful information.

Hard Surfaces



Above: *In many traditional urban and rural locations a simple surface dressing with rolled gravel is the most suitable solution for driveways and access routes.*



Right: *Standard footways and concrete kerbs and the use of block paviors, on the other hand, have a "suburban" character and appearance and should be avoided in areas which retain their traditional character.*

6.8 HARD SURFACES

In the past hard surfacing was selected according to the function of the space and the availability of materials. In the more important and heavily used areas stone flags and kerbs were imported to provide a smooth hard wearing surface for pedestrians, setts were laid to accommodate vehicular traffic, brick was used for informal paved areas in gardens and gravel was laid in areas with limited pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

Where the old materials exist they should be retained or relayed because they are both valuable and historically important and, like other existing mature on-site features, will help to integrate new developments into the existing street scene.

Hard surfaces generally in new developments should be given very careful consideration as they can have as much effect on the appearance of the scheme as the materials used on the buildings themselves. The key to choosing appropriate surfacing materials is simplicity. Bright colours, too many different textures and elaborate patterns are, in most situations, unnecessary and should be avoided. Natural materials are generally much better than artificial, however, where man made alternatives have to be used, colour, texture and weathering properties should all be checked before specifying.

As with external works and landscaping generally, certain types of surface materials are more appropriate to some locations than others. Generally, in rural areas and in some urban locations, a simple tarmac road without kerbs will be adequate especially if individual driveways are gravelled. However, as large areas of tarmac can appear unattractive, its appearance can be improved by using different aggregates or by surface dressing with rolled gravel on sprayed tar. Where kerbs are essential, very often an alternative to the standard concrete kerbing should be sought because in many parts of the District, in both rural and urban situations, they are not sympathetic to the traditional character of the area.

Block paviours for driveways, roads and footpaths is becoming increasingly popular, however, their use should be very carefully considered as some designs, when used in the older, more traditional locations, can appear overtly suburban. In rural situations in particular block paviors can have an especially discordant effect as they are not at all sympathetic to the traditional character of villages. Where they are used the choice of colour is important, for example "red" concrete paviours often appear pink or purple

SECTION 7 – AREAS TO BE PROTECTED FROM DEVELOPMENT

The District Council has recognised that whilst making adequate provision for further development within settlements, this needs to be balanced with the interests of conservation. As outlined in Section 3, the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Policy LP28 has been formulated with this aim in mind:

> "Policy LP28 – Areas to be Protected from Development.
>
> Development will not normally be permitted on:
>
> (i) those areas identified on the Proposals Map to be protected from development, or further development, or
>
> (ii) other sites, gaps, gardens or spaces which make an important contribution in an undeveloped form to a town or village, its setting, its character, or the surrounding landscape or townscape."

In order to assist with the application of this policy, this section describes some of the more common situations where LP28 (ii) is intended to apply.

Areas of low density development

Within many of the District's towns and villages there are areas of low density development which fall within the settlements defined Physical Limits Boundary. The character and appearance of these areas is often primarily derived from the existence of detached buildings occupying large sites.

Where this sort of space exists it is the landscape which is the visually dominant feature. Large trees tend to be retained and allowed to grow to maturity and hedges and shrubs can be planted rather than fences or similar structures having to be erected in order to provide sufficient privacy.

In these often very attractive and desirable locations there is inevitably considerable pressure for the sub-division of large plots and for new development to take place. Development proposals which would erode the essential landscape dominated character of such areas will be resisted, especially as similar proposals over time would cumulatively erode and eventually destroy the special character of such areas.

Individual buildings occupying extensive sites

In many densely built up areas there are often sites where individual buildings occupy very extensive grounds. Sometimes the building is located close to a road or other properties, sometimes it is located away from other buildings towards the middle of the site.

Although often in private ownership, such sites are extremely important in general amenity terms and usually make a significant contribution to the overall character and appearance of not just the immediate surrounding area but to the town or village as a whole.

Many of these sites are surrounded by high brick walls and some have interesting entrances on street frontages often affording attractive glimpses of the space beyond. Usually they are large enough to accommodate a number of mature trees which can be

seen from considerable distances and can form an important backdrop to views and vistas.

Because of the unique contribution such sites make to the character of towns and villages, they will often not be considered suitable for development.

Undeveloped sites within built up areas

In the past the towns and villages in the District had many, sometimes large, open areas of land, such as orchards, meadows, allotments, situated close to the central built up area. The pace of recent development, however, has meant that many of these sites have now been built on. This makes the few that remain much more valuable as open spaces.

Some of these sites are neglected or overgrown, some are used for informal recreation or as allotments, many are rural in character and in their undeveloped state they provide essential visual relief and contrast within an otherwise built up area.

Some sites are relatively small but that does not necessarily diminish their importance because where a small open space is surrounded by existing development the effect of building on it can take on a far greater significance, especially if the site is open to public view. In such a situation just a single new building can transform the whole character of the area from one which retains a relatively loose-knit informal nature to one which will appear to be predominantly built up.

Sites which contribute to the rural character of settlements

Although some villages in the District have a centre which primarily comprises buildings placed closely together on street frontages, many have a more rural, loose-knit character. This character is produced by the combination of some buildings being positioned close to the road whilst many others are set back within large open spaces.

The open spaces within these settlements are provided not only by private gardens but also by undeveloped sites such as common land, paddocks, village greens, fields, meadows, highway verges, marshland, orchards etc.

These spaces, which may contain mature trees, shrubs and hedgerows, make an important contribution to the character of a village as they appear as a significant element of the countryside reaching into the street scene. They can also provide a pleasant contrast to the built up areas of the village by affording open views out towards the countryside beyond, allowing the backdrop of the rural landscape to form an integral part of the appearance of the centre of the village.

Because of the prominent location of many of these sites, their retention in an undeveloped state can be of fundamental importance to the preservation of the character and appearance of a settlement as a whole. For, if they were allowed to be developed, then the overall rural atmosphere of a village would be irrevocably damaged.

Sites which contribute to views and vistas within settlements

The setting of many of the towns and villages of the District plays a very important role in establishing their overall character. Open spaces and gaps within these settlements often allows important views and vistas to be formed out beyond the built up area and these provide a constant reminder of the close relationship which exists between the settlement and its setting.

Views of the sea, a river, marsh or woodland from the built up area together with glimpses of such things as a large country house, a church, a castle or a light house all form important reminders of the context and location of a town or village. It is vital, therefore, that the spaces which create these views and vistas are adequately protected through the planning process.

The edge of settlements

Areas which are located close to the edge of the built up parts of town or villages are often particularly prominent when viewed from the surrounding countryside due to topography, an open landscape or the shape and form of the settlement itself.

Sometimes, especially with larger settlements, the change from urban to rural can be abrupt, visually a hard edge. In contrast, some villages have a very open character with the countryside appearing to come right into the centre.

Most traditional settlements however, developed out from the centre with a gradual transition between the densely built up central area and the sparsely populated open countryside. In many instances, therefore, it will be important to acknowledge this characteristic and retain a lower density of development within outer areas of settlements.

The sub-division of existing large residential plots on the edge of towns and villages, can involve new dwellings being constructed on very prominent sites, with the often not so well designed rear elevations facing onto open countryside. In order to make the most of the view there is a tendency for existing screening trees and hedges to be removed and new suburban gardens to be created.

The normal associated domestic paraphernalia, such as fences, sheds, garages, washing lines etc., are then exposed to public view across large tracts of open countryside.

In order to ensure that there is an appropriate edge to the towns and villages in the District, any development proposals which are put forward for sites close to the boundary of a settlement should reflect its overall character and its relationship with the countryside alongside. However, even where the character of the edge of a settlement has already in part been prejudiced by new development, the Council will resist the principle of any further development of a similar nature taking place.

Sites that are close to listed buildings or located within conservation areas

"In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting..." (Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

Furthermore, in considering proposals within a conservation area:

"... special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area". (Section 71(1).

With buildings of architectural or historic interest their setting is very often an essential feature of their character and therefore their importance. Village churches, for example, are associated with undeveloped green open spaces which sometimes extend well beyond the confines of the church yard. Furthermore, Georgian and Victorian country houses and rectories were designed to occupy spacious landscaped grounds and farmhouses are historically associated with groups of traditional agricultural buildings and a rural setting.

New development, no matter how well designed, can dramatically affect and significantly devalue the character and importance of an historic building. An open, underdeveloped aspect is often essential in order to provide an appropriate setting for such buildings. The Council will, therefore, not allow development, or further development, to take place on sites which would adversely affect the setting of any of the District's listed buildings.

The conservation areas of the District are mostly centred upon listed buildings. They also comprise pleasant groups of other buildings, open spaces, trees, an historic or unique street pattern, together with other features of architectural, historic or archaeological interest. It is the character of designated areas that conservation area legislation seeks to preserve or enhance.

Inappropriate new development, even of a relatively minor nature, for example a single new house, can very often have a dramatic effect upon, and substantially erode, the whole character of a conservation area.

The District Council will strongly resist any proposals for sites within its conservation areas which, because of their undeveloped state, make an important contribution to the character of that area.

SECTION 8 – MAKING PLANNING APPLICATIONS

It is surprising how often planning applications are made to the Local Authority which contain too little or the wrong sort of information. This can have the effect of delaying consideration of the proposals and sometimes leads to confusion and frustration on behalf of both the applicant (and agent) and the Planning Authority.

Although applicants are certainly not encouraged to produce full working drawings at the planning stage, it would greatly assist the processing of applications if adequate information was to be submitted right from the start.

What is required is sufficient information for the Planning Officers to be able to properly assess the impact of the proposals for any site and for them to be able to communicate their assessment to the Planning Committee.

When dealing with sensitive sites, where an application is likely to be controversial or when the issues are complicated, it is important that early discussions are held with the Authority before too much work is undertaken.

However, it is hoped that with many proposals, the publication of this document will enable potential applicants to have a clearer understanding of the Council's standards and expectations with regard to design issues, thereby making lengthy pre-application discussions unnecessary.

When making planning applications it is strongly recommended that, as well as the usual forms, certificates and appropriate fee, the following information should be submitted:

Outline applications

Sometimes, on less sensitive sites, the Authority may accept Outline applications for infill or small groups of houses in order to establish the principle of residential use of a particular parcel of land. Such applications should include a site survey and analysis on a plan at a scale of at least 1:200. It is important that the plan shows the site in context and that all the surrounding development, highways and important landscape features are clearly shown.

Reserved Matter applications

These should contain the same information as required for full planning applications as described opposite.

Full applications

For most sites, the District Council will require applications for full planning permission to be made and the following information should be submitted:

Site survey and analysis – plans (min 1:200) should show all existing trees and hedgerows, the location of all the buildings on and around the site, all existing walls, fences, driveways and hardstandings, together with such features as ditches, streams, banks, ponds etc. Existing site levels should also be shown.

Tree Survey – where there are existing trees on around the site a proper tree survey should always be carried out. Each tree should be plotted (including any which overhang the site) and given a number to identify it. The species, spread of its canopy and the size of the girth of the trunk should be shown. An estimate of its height and an assessment of its physical condition and health should also be given.

Site Plan – at 1:200 showing all the changes that are proposed for the site including all new buildings, structures, landscape features, roads, driveways, footpaths, walls and fences.

Plans, elevations and sections – of all proposed buildings, clearly annotated (ideally with overall dimensions shown) at a scale of 1:100 or larger.

Street elevations – at an appropriate scale, illustrating the relationship between any new buildings and the location, forms, scale and heights of the buildings alongside.

Plans and sections showing levels – where development is to take place on sloping ground, drawings should be submitted clearly showing the levels of all new proposed land forms, buildings and other structures relative to those which will remain unchanged both within and adjacent to the site.

Supporting statement – describing the design approach which has been adopted together with an explantation of (a) how the proposals relates to and respects the historical form, scale and character of the locality or (b) in areas or little townscape quality, how the proposals will help to improve the overall character and quality of the local environment.

Conditions

In certain circumstances the Council will attach conditions to a permission requiring further information or detailed drawings to be submitted and approved before a particular part of a development is commenced. This will usually be done in circumstances where it is important that the detailed design of buildings should be of an appropriate standard.