

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE DESIGN GUIDE



Northamptonshire
Campaign to Protect Rural England



Foreword -- NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE DESIGN GUIDE

In 2000 the Rockingham Forest Trust published a Design Guide that had been prepared with the local Planning Authorities in the Rockingham Forest area. This became Supplementary Planning Guidance in that part of the county and has proved to be of high value to a wide variety of those who are involved in development there. CPRE Northamptonshire (the Northamptonshire branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England) aims to protect and enhance the character and vitality of Northamptonshire for the benefit of all, and we are very grateful to the Trust for allowing us to amend and extend their Design Guide so that it applies to the whole of the County.

For the countryside to prosper some new development is important, so CPRE seeks to encourage the right kind of building in suitable places. New building does not have to follow old patterns but it does at least need to fit in with the distinctive vernacular style of Northamptonshire. Estates of new houses which could have been built anywhere in England are unlikely to improve the character of the county. We hope that this Design Guide will assist planning authorities, parish councils and developers to create a built environment of which the county can be proud.



Handwritten signature of Sir Paul Hayter.

Sir Paul Hayter, Chairman CPRE Northamptonshire

The Editorial committee.

Handwritten signature of Alan Mayes.

Alan Mayes

Handwritten signature of John Day.

John Day

Handwritten signature of Colin Ray.

Colin Ray

Handwritten signature of David Edsall.

David Edsall

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Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

Introduction to the Northamptonshire Countryside Design Guide

A Countryside Design Guide is a descriptive analysis, which explains in simple terms the essential design relationship between the landscape, settlement patterns and buildings. It emphasises, as its starting point in the analysis, the settlement in its countryside setting, which enables the necessary links to be made between building design and countryside character.

From this descriptive analysis a Countryside Design Guide draws principles, which can be applied generally to developments in the area and sets out the design implications that affect the choices open to designers. Its purpose is to identify ways in which new development can be designed to harmonise with and enhance local character.

A Countryside Design Summary also provides a wider context for the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans by individual communities and will be an aid in forming observations and representations to local planning authorities in their consideration of development proposals.

The Northamptonshire Countryside

Northamptonshire is a county where the larger towns have been successfully contained and remain surrounded by truly rural countryside peppered with characterful villages and smaller market towns, the latter often also having an industrial role. With the variety of local geology and topography and the quite large distances from north to south of the county these settlements vary in their use of building materials and style, but on the whole the use of limestone or ironstone is the dominant feature.

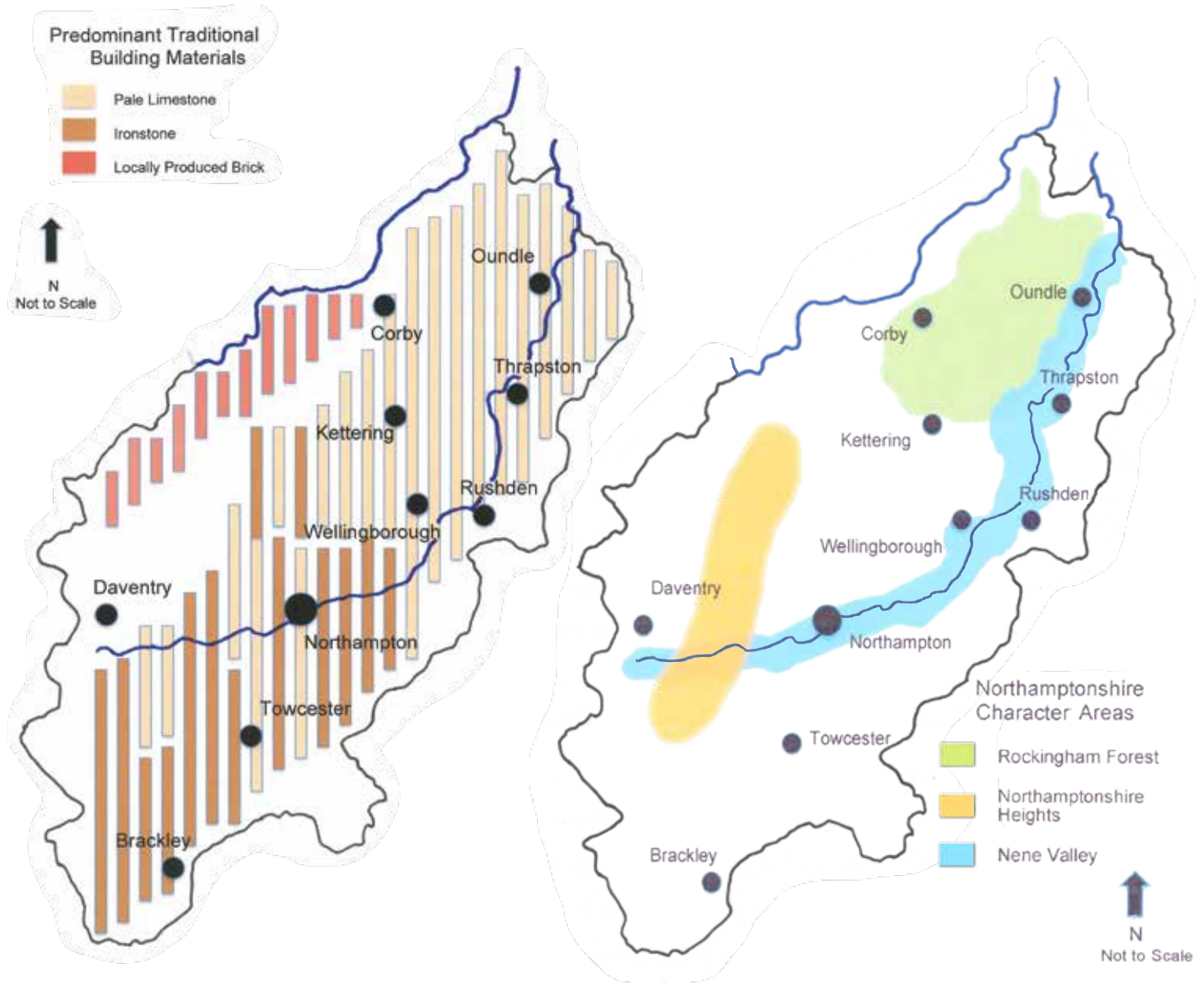
Across the county, however, a number of character areas can be identified where there are variations in style and the use of materials in building construction. The Nene Valley and the Northamptonshire Heights are well known examples of this, the first noted for its arable farming and the latter for grazing, and this has influenced the character of settlements and buildings.

The human responses to the local geology, topography, vegetation and climate, which physically manifest themselves in the farming practices, settlement patterns and buildings, give the county its distinctive character. At the local level, the massing, scale and details of buildings, and their relationship to each other and the landscape, all combine to create this character.



In the Northamptonshire villages the combination of building style, settlement pattern and their countryside setting creates the distinctive character of the county.

Despite the existence of a number of quite distinctive character areas in the county a pattern of small towns and compact villages is found throughout Northamptonshire. The historic core of these villages often includes a church, manor house, farmhouses and cottages, with stone the dominant original building material. In the south, west, and the upland area referred to as the Northamptonshire Heights the iron rich stone is a deeper colour than the paler limestone found in the villages further east along the Nene Valley and in the Rockingham Forest area to the north. Houses made of locally produced bricks are found in the settlements in the north west of the county near the Leicestershire border.



Today, the distinctive character of settlements within the county is threatened by inappropriate development, which all too often has resulted in standardised “suburban type” design solutions.

Much of the recent development in the county has failed to take adequate account of its context. Inappropriate layout and landscaping, the insensitive application of highway standards, the use of standard house types and inappropriate building materials are all gradually eroding the character of the county’s historic settlements.

The destruction of local character should not be considered an inevitable consequence of progress. Instead, the presumption must be in favour of encouraging change which positively contributes to, and enhances the character of the area. If the character of settlements is to be maintained and enhanced, new development must reflect local tradition. However, this does not imply that all new buildings should be faithful replicas of the past. Innovative contemporary building design, which reflects the local character, should be encouraged.

The Planning Context

This Design Guide provides informal guidance to all those involved in development to ensure that the resulting buildings enhance the character and form of the existing environment. It will provide an input to the preparation of local plans and the consideration of development proposals that will have an impact on the character of the county.

This Design Guide has been prepared to be in accord with the National Planning Policy Framework which places great emphasis on good design and local distinctiveness, and which was published on 27 March 2012. This framework makes it clear that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment.

The NPPF states that :

Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials.
- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

The framework goes on to say :

- It is proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.
- local planning authorities should consider using design codes where they could help deliver high quality outcomes.

The Government's planning practice guidelines on design, revised on 6 March 2014, state :-

Distinctiveness is what often makes a place special and valued. It relies on physical aspects such as :

- the local pattern of street blocks and plots.
- building forms.
- details and materials.
- style and vernacular.
- landform and gardens, parks, trees and plants.
- wildlife habitats and micro-climates.

The guidelines consider that :

A Local or Neighbourhood Plan is essential to achieving high quality places. A key part of any plan is understanding and appreciating the context of an area, so that proposals can then be developed to respect it. Good design interprets and builds on historic character, natural resources and the aspirations of local communities.

Aim and Objectives of the Northamptonshire Countryside Design Guide

Aim

To protect and enhance the character of existing settlements and maintain local distinctiveness. Any proposal for development within the county should demonstrate that account has been taken of the context in which it is to be situated and must show an appreciation and understanding of the local character.

Objectives

To provide a framework for the design of new development which maintains and enhances the traditional character of Northamptonshire.

To inform parish councils and others who are consulted on planning applications about local design issues.

To provide a framework for the preparation of community-led Neighbourhood Plans which will similarly influence new development and conservation.

To raise general awareness about the local built environment and design issues amongst local school and community groups.

To maintain and enhance the character of the county by encouraging property owners to make changes and repairs in an appropriate way.

How to use the Countryside Design Guide

The following two chapters of this document provide a framework for analysing all aspects of the existing character of settlements and designing appropriate new development, which reflects this character. These two chapters are:

Character Area Description and Design Implications.

Both of these chapters use the same headings to provide a framework for analysing the character of particular development sites and settlements and influencing new design according to Landscape Setting, Settlement Pattern and Building Style. The flow diagram on the next page illustrates how best to use the Design Guide to enable this to be done.

The Character Area Description is intended as an introduction to the county's character. The general nature of its descriptions should be used as a prompt for further analysis rather than as a substitute for it.

The guidance included in the Design Implications chapter is intended to be informative without being too prescriptive. It recognises that it is important to reflect traditional character without stifling contemporary design. The relevance of the different sections will vary with the size and location of particular developments.

The principles contained within the Design Guide should influence all types of new buildings. However, new agricultural and industrial buildings have particular design issues associated with their function, scale and use of materials, which may limit its application to them.

The Countryside Design Process

The design process should involve assessing the existing character of a site's landscape setting, settlement pattern and building style to develop corresponding design solutions. The flowchart below indicates how to use the chapters of the Design Guide.

Chapter 2

Character Area Description



Assess Existing Character

2.1
Landscape Setting



3.1



2.2
Settlement Pattern



3.2



2.3
Building Style



3.3

Chapter 3

Considers the Design Implication Leading to the Design Solutions



Develop Design Solution



Chapter 4

Provides additional guidance about the character and design implications particular to the re-use of farm and other non-residential buildings.



Chapter 2 CHARACTER AREA DESCRIPTION

Introduction

This chapter describes the defining character of the countryside in terms of its landscape setting, settlement pattern and building style. It provides the basis for the design implications in Chapter Three.

In providing this description, it is recognised that, whilst there are common features across the county, others may be unique to particular settlements. The description given here, therefore, should be used as a prompt for further analysis of the surrounding character of a specific development site, rather than as a substitute for it.

2.1 LANDSCAPE SETTING

This section describes the setting of buildings and settlements within the wider landscape and how they relate to one another. It also considers landscaping within settlements. An understanding of the local character at this scale is an essential prerequisite for analysing the siting of any new development and mitigating its impact on the surrounding countryside.

Wider Countryside

Despite town expansion and recent commercial development, rural Northamptonshire remains primarily a county of villages and small market towns. The Nene Valley and Rockingham Forest areas have an undisturbed rural quality, which is typically characterised by partially hidden villages nestling in shallow valleys and with open views across undulating arable fields towards ridge-top woodlands.

On the steeper slopes of the Welland Valley the villages occupy prominent scarp-edge locations with extensive views both to and from the countryside to the west.

To the south and west of the county the land is more undulating and the slopes steeper than in the north, with large areas of woodland such as at Salcey and Yardley Chase still remaining. Here the villages usually follow the pattern of the houses lining the streets, or are sometimes at right angles to the street, but may also often include houses clustered round an open green space.

The most familiar views between settlements and the wider countryside are from the main roads, which follow the principal valleys and often skirt the villages, or from the minor roads, which follow more meandering routes into the villages.

Linear features such as hedgerows, green lanes, abandoned railway lines and small streams and ditches connect different habitats to provide important visual and conservation links across otherwise open arable and pasture areas.

While the survival of large areas of woodland characterises parts of the county, large historic parks such as Rockingham, Deene, Drayton, Boughton, Althorp and Castle Ashby and the grounds of other large houses within villages have influenced settlement pattern and layout.

Farms, with their clusters of traditional barns, are landmarks in the open countryside. Generally there is little development of any kind on higher ground. Redundant quarries and abandoned World War II airfields are prominent features.

Linear features such as hedgerows connect different habitats and provide important visual links.



Settlement Edge Landscapes

The landscape around village and town edges is particularly important as it delineates a settlement and integrates it within the wider countryside setting.

In the landscape immediately around settlements there are more enclosed areas of pasture, with smaller field sizes, a better defined hedge structure, a greater number of trees and overall a more intimate character, than in the open countryside. Hedgerows, which principally comprise hawthorn with mature ash and oak, commonly delineate the boundaries between settlement edges and the more open, arable farmland beyond. Some of these hedgerows are pre-enclosure and follow irregular boundaries but the majority reflect the 18th century enclosure profile.

The linear form of many villages creates an end-on perspective, which makes them unobtrusive in the landscape. Approaching along the main roads, stone boundary walls and mature trees often announce the otherwise hidden village edge.

Landscaping within Settlements

Small open areas and landscape features create variety and soften the appearance of village centres. Mature trees provide landmarks, break up the skyline and define spaces. Stone walls and native hedgerows form attractive links between properties and provide continuous enclosure along street frontages. In the south the houses often front onto open green areas within the village envelope.

Also in many settlements there are large open areas which are a continuation of the surrounding agricultural landscapes. These include parkland, the grounds of larger houses, churchyards, areas of enclosed pasture and stream-side meadows with willow pollards.

In the landscape immediately around settlements there are more enclosed areas of pasture and overall a more intimate character.



Small open areas create variety within villages

2.2 SETTLEMENT PATTERN

This section describes the overall pattern of built and open areas at a street scale. Character analysis at this level is often overlooked, but it is of great importance in determining the appropriate layout of new development if the character of a settlement is to be maintained. It is relevant both in the design of larger developments and in ensuring that individual buildings are appropriately positioned in relation to existing street frontages.

Settlement Form and Street Layout

Topography is an important factor which historically has determined the form of the county's settlements and limited their expansion.

The majority of settlements in the Rockingham Forest area nestle in shallow valleys, where the built form is largely confined to a platform of land above the floodplain. Duddington, King's Cliffe and Geddington are examples of this type. Elsewhere, settlements such as Aldwincle, Twywell and Upper Benefield occupy higher ground on the undulating valley sides and ridge-tops.

Both the valley bottom and ridge-top settlements are dominated by a main street, which winds gently to follow the contours, providing minor variations in ridgeline height, with views that unfold along its length. These streets are enclosed by an almost continuous roadside frontage of buildings, walls and native hedges. Some settlements have developed back lanes, which run parallel to the main street with inter-connecting footpaths.

The relative steepness of the scarp-edge of the Welland Valley increases the prominence of settlements on its slopes, as for example at Gretton and Wilbarston. These villages have an open edge and views which extend into and across the settlement. Such settlements occupy higher ground and have spread down the steeper valley slopes along the main routes. These villages have a more concentrated network of shorter, inter-connected streets, which lead to the village centre.

The villages in the Northamptonshire Heights, south and west of Northampton, are less linear than those further north with the houses sometimes end onto the street. They are also often clustered round green open areas, and mature trees are a major feature within the village envelope. Whilst ironstone is the prominent building material, sometimes used as banding with lighter coloured stone, some villages have a variety of 18th and 19th century brick buildings intermingled with the stone ones.

Historic Settlement Forms in the County

- 1 Ridge-top settlement with a main street enclosed by buildings, connecting walls and native hedgerows.
- 2 Scarp-edge settlement along the Welland Valley, with a more concentrated network of shorter interconnected streets leading from the village centre.
- 3 Valley bottom settlement, largely confined to a platform of land above the floodplain and dominated by enclosed streets.
- 4 Southern settlement with an important open green area at its centre and radiating roads leading off.



The containment of the built form at the same elevation, set within mature landscapes, ensures that settlements sit comfortably within the wider countryside, particularly where traditional buildings still form the settlement's edges. This creates a strong 'sense of arrival' on entering settlements through an often narrow 'gateway' enclosed by street-front buildings or walls. More recently, however, this has been eroded by the advent of modern development along approach roads, which has changed both the views and approaches into some villages. The introduction of cul-de-sac and small estates on village edges has created a very different character, which does not provide the same inter-connections with the village centres.

Spaces Between Buildings

The spatial form of many village centres in the county is building dominated, with a strong sense of enclosure created by almost continuous frontages along the roads. The buildings line the roads, which in turn generally follow the contours. Houses are either built against one another or are linked by connecting walls, which are positioned at the back edge of the footways.

However in the south of the county there are often green open spaces or verges which separate some of the houses from the roadside. Other settlements comprise either individual or small groups of buildings, separated by open spaces but linked by walls or native hedgerows.

Small variations in the road and footway width create variety, which is added to by occasional, usually larger properties set back behind boundary walls. Vistas open and close along the curving roads. Variations in the ridgeline status and size of properties add further interest and variety, whilst the colour of the local stone provides a strong unifying influence, and distinguishes the different character areas across the county.

Open land in village centres creates variety within the street scene and frames views into the open countryside.



Variations in setting and level of the roofline



The same can be seen here but the houses are clustered round a large open green area

2.3 BUILDING STYLE

This section looks at building style at the scale of the individual property and identifies a number of common features. It does so by distinguishing a hierarchy of form, materials and details.

A knowledge of the traditional building styles of the Northamptonshire countryside is essential if new development is to be designed to respect its context. It is the relatively small palette of materials and techniques traditionally used in the countryside and the variations between the character areas which ensure that buildings of different ages and styles sit harmoniously together.

Building Form and Scale

The form of different buildings has an important influence on local character which must be appreciated and understood before materials and details are considered.

Typically there is a mixture of house types and styles within settlements, but they often share a number of common features. Many buildings are rectangular in plan and of single room depth with steeply pitched gabled roofs running along their lengths. Increases in floor space are often accommodated in single and two storey projections, to the rear and side of the original building.



A typical mixture of house types

Variation in architectural style and detail.
Minor variation in ridge and eaves height

Variation in house sizes.
Roof line punctuated by chimney stacks

Shallower roof pitches occur on 19th century buildings, dictated by the increased availability and use of materials such as Welsh slate. Hipped roofs, though not common, are characteristic of estate properties within some villages and some larger polite houses.

Building Materials

Historically, the relatively limited range of local walling and roofing materials across the county has been fundamental in creating a consistency in colour and texture between buildings of different periods.

There are many good examples of new build houses using traditional materials, window styles and positioning in villages throughout the county, but there are also some developments where the materials are more modern and design features do not reflect the character of the area and stand out in contrast with the older more traditional buildings. While there is scope for innovation and modern design solutions, it is important to avoid the use of materials and designs that clash with the character of the area.

Building Materials continued over leaf

Walling

The nature and character of the stone used within the county area can be seen to change gradually from the creamy grey limestone in the north to the brown ironstone found more commonly in the south and west of the county. Between the two extremes there are many examples of the stone being used to good effect in the form of polychrome banding (courses of ironstone and limestone laid in contrasting bands) or the use of ironstone quoins, dressings, string courses, mullioned windows and door surrounds.

Vernacular buildings in the county area are generally constructed with simply dressed or rubble stone, often sourced from local quarries.

The stone is traditionally laid in horizontal courses of stones of uniform height but varying lengths, with each course being random in height to the one above and below. Random, uncoursed stonework and courses with jumper stones are not traditional to the area.

Red brick laid in Flemish bond with fine jointing is a common feature of 19th century development. The use of yellow stock brick is also found in Victorian buildings in some settlements.



Simply dressed
Limestone



Brick in Flemish
bond



Ashlar with regular
coursing and fine
joints



Simply dressed
Ironstone



Limestone and
Ironstone
polychrome banding

Buildings at the upper end of the social scale, such as manor houses and rectories, tend to be characterised by the use of dressed stone and ashlar with carved and dressed stone features. However, quite modest cottages were also built using dressed stone.

The quality of the stonework is generally a reflection of either the status of the building or the status of the owner or benefactor. The higher the status of the building, the better the stone is likely to be dressed, the more regular the coursing and the finer the joints.

Boundary Walls

Boundary walls provide important links within settlements and around parklands, the courses of which tend to follow the contours of the land. The walls are generally capped with stones laid on edge or with half-round mortar. Other methods of protecting walls from the elements include the use of roofing materials and brick.



Capped with stone



Capped with mortar



Capped with blue brick

Roofing materials

Thatch

The most common roofing material until the 19th century for low and medium status houses and barns was straw thatch, now referred to as long straw, with simple flush wrap-over ridges secured with liggers.

The thatched roofs of the area are typically steep, often with pitches up to 70°. Dormers with swept skirts provide daylight to habitable roof space, the windows of which are typically double casements.

The verges are generally either raised gable parapets capped with coping stones or finished with a rolled verge of thatch secured by horizontal liggers.

Buildings where the thatch has been replaced by an alternative material may often be identified by the height of the gable parapets and the exposure of rubble stonework at the base of the chimney stacks.



Stone slates

In the north of the county Collyweston stone slates have been made in their current form since the 16th century. The 19th century witnessed a significant increase in their use and many previously thatched buildings were re-roofed with Collyweston stone slates. Further west and in the south other types of stone slate can occasionally be found,

The slates are traditionally spot bedded on lime mortar and laid with a double overlap in diminishing courses up the roof, a practice which visually reinforces the effects of perspective.

Stone slate roofs are steeply pitched gabled forms with swept or laced valleys. Hipped stone slate roofs, though not common, are more characteristic of estate properties and more polite buildings influenced by architectural fashions.



Welsh blue slate

Welsh blue slate was not widely available until the mid 19th century when the ability to transport the material from its source improved with the introduction of the railways.

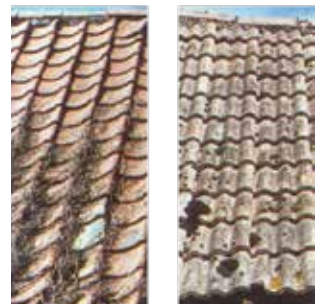
Welsh slate may be laid at shallow pitches, but is also commonly seen on steeper pitched roofs where it has been used as a replacement for thatch or Collyweston stone slate.



Clay tiles

Red, orange and buff clay pantiles and plain tiles in various forms can be found throughout the county, often on subsidiary buildings and sometimes as a replacement for stone slate or thatch.

There is a limited use of blue/black pantiles in the Kettering area. Pantiles were originally imported from Holland in the late 17th century and were subsequently made locally. Most examples, however, date from the 19th century.



Pantiles were an inexpensive roof covering and, when used as the original roofing material, were usually confined to lower status cottages and outbuildings. The complex profile and large size of clay pantiles also tend to restrict their use to relatively simple gabled roofs.

Clay Tiles continued

Plain clay tiles are also found in parts of the county. These vary in shape and size, largely due to variations in the clay and conditions under which they were made. The use of plain tiles was closely associated with the manufacture of bricks and the materials are often found together.



Building Details

In this description of the Northamptonshire countryside's character, it is important to consider the architectural details that commonly appear on local buildings. In general the building details used across the county are very simple and relate to the narrow range of materials used and to the extent to which wealth and fashion were expressed in the buildings.



Vernacular buildings have a simple, uncluttered appearance

Windows

The front elevations of vernacular buildings within the county tend to have a simple, uncluttered appearance, punctuated only by the door and window openings. An important characteristic typical of the local vernacular is the large proportion of solid masonry in relation to the limited size and number of openings. Window patterns tend to reflect the status, period and style of the particular building.

The simpler vernacular buildings generally have side-hung timber casements of similar proportions to their stone mullioned counterparts of higher status properties.

Upper floor windows are usually smaller in height, and often in width, than those at ground floor level.

Window frames are recessed within the opening approximately 75-100mm from the external face of the masonry and generally are under timber or stone lintels. This introduces relief and interest within an elevation and offers greater protection from the elements. Generally with casement windows, opening and fixed lights are constructed to similar dimensions and have a matching appearance.

Timber windows are constructed of painted softwood. Window frames constructed from oak, however, are left untreated.



Stone mullions



Metal casements



Timber casements



Vertical sliding sashes

Doors

Door types vary according to status, period and style, and include simple vertical boarded ledged and braced, framed ledged and braced and panelled types. Enclosed porches are rarely found on vernacular buildings. Simple lean-to, pitched, or flat roof canopies over the door; retain the simple uncluttered appearance of front elevations, whilst providing a degree of protection against the weather.

The introduction of entrance halls into buildings, from about 1720 onwards, witnessed the increasing use of fanlights above the door to provide daylight.



Four-panelled door under fanlight



Vertical boarded, ledged and braced door



Six-panelled door



Pitched roof canopy

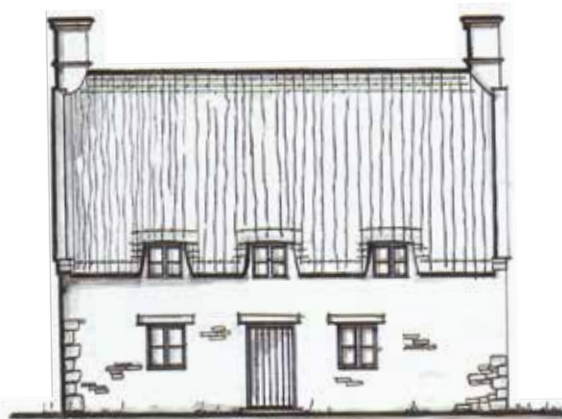
Dormers

A variety of dormers are found, the type being largely dictated by the characteristics of the various roofing materials. Collyweston stone slate roofs generally have gabled or hipped dormers; clay tiles and blue slate favour simple sloping dormers; while thatched roofs usually have swept dormers.

Dormers are constructed to create a complete or half storey within the roof space by breaking the eaves line. The dormer cheeks are often finished either in render or, in the case of many Collyweston roofs, in stone slates.



Rendered cheeks



Dormers provide daylight to habitable roofspace



Gabled



Swept dormer in long straw thatch



Hipped dormer on Collyweston roof

Verges and Eaves



Plain overhanging



Coped or Gabled
parapet



Black painted cast iron
rainwater goods on rise
and fall stirrup brackets



Coped Gable
parapet with
kneeler stone



Thatched roof with
rolled verges

Verges are often in the form of coped gable parapets, which may include kneeler stones. Alternatively, they may be in the form of plain overhanging verges with no undercloak.

Whilst the use of bargeboards is not typical, some later buildings and buildings which have been modified do have them.

Similarly, fascia boards and boxed eaves are not typical features of vernacular buildings.

Plain overhanging rainwater goods are traditionally black painted cast iron, with the gutters mounted on rise and fall stirrup brackets spiked into the wall.

Chimney Stacks

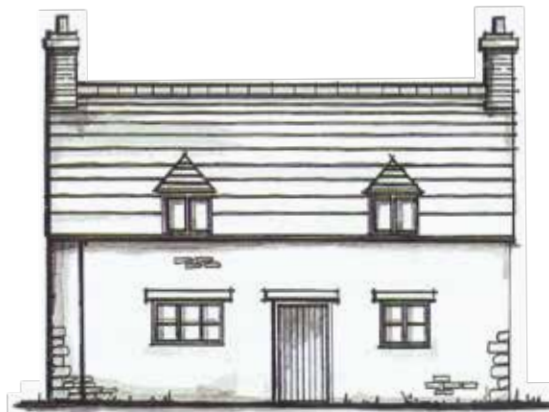
Chimney stacks are an important feature on many buildings. They have internal flues and are positioned on the ridge line. Buildings with medieval origins may have stacks rising from a position to one side of the doorway, approximately a third of the way along the ridge. Later buildings have flanking stacks positioned on the ridge line at the gable ends. Stacks may have stone or terracotta chimney pots.

The bases of chimney stacks in the area are usually stone with detailing appropriate to their social status. The more formal or polite the building, the more likely it is to have ashlar shafts and carved stone cornices and copings.

Chimney stacks are generally constructed of dressed slabs of limestone, unless they are later brick replacements. Rubble stone was not generally used in the visible sections of the chimney stack, above the roof covering. Rubble stone is usually only visible above the roofing material on buildings where the thatch has been replaced with an alternative material.



Brick and dressed stone
stack on the ridge line



Chimney Stacks are Important
features on many buildings



Ashlar Stack with
classical influences

Chapter 3 DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter defines the design implications that stem from the character analysis described in chapter 2. In using the framework provided here, it is important to recognise that the relevance of the different headings will vary with the size and location of any proposed development. For example, issues related to landscape setting and settlement pattern are likely to be more applicable to a larger, village-edge site than a single, infill plot.

This chapter does not seek to stifle innovative contemporary design, but rather it aims to stimulate the creation of new buildings which, when sensitively designed and located, may contribute positively to the character of settlements in the county.

The checklists provided here should be used to prepare site-specific development appraisals. In this way each new development will uniquely relate to its site and achieve a balance between traditional character and contemporary design.

Design and Access Statements

A design and access statement which is usually required with all planning applications is a structured way of assessing the characteristics of a particular site and demonstrating how they have been taken into account in developing specific design principles. The character descriptions in the preceding chapter, and the design checklists that follow, should be used to guide this assessment process.

It is always useful to discuss development proposals with the Local Planning Authority before detailed plans are prepared or submitted.

3.1 LANDSCAPE SETTING

Landscape design should form an integral part of any development in the county. Proposals should ensure that opportunities are taken to enhance and conserve countryside and the setting of the development within it.

Because of the openness and undisturbed character of the landscape, any development which is inappropriately sited, designed, or landscaped may have a negative impact over a wider area of countryside.

Landscape Checklist

Wider Countryside

Development proposals should seek to sustain and enhance the wider countryside setting by:

Considering the landscape, ecological and archaeological criteria at an early stage within the design process.

Mitigating the impact of larger developments by contributing positively to the conservation and enhancement of landscape features in the surrounding countryside.

Maintaining or improving footpath and bridleway links to the wider countryside.

Taking account of the impact of new development on prominent views between the settlement and wider countryside and maintaining vistas of important features such as church spires or landmark buildings.

Ensuring that any type of development on the edge of towns does not intrude or have a negative impact on adjacent countryside through the use of inappropriate design, materials or colour, especially in exposed areas. It is important that local topography is taken into account. Development which is inappropriately sited, designed, or landscaped may have a negative impact over a wide area of countryside.

Settlement Edge Landscapes

A harmonious but defined transition should be secured between countryside and settlement by:

Ensuring the retention of existing field patterns and, where possible, using mature hedgerows and trees to integrate development.

Creating new landscape features, which reflect the traditional pattern of hedgerows with trees, parkland planting and pasture. This will soften and enclose new settlement-edge development to integrate it with the surrounding landscape and provide both visual and ecological links.

Maintaining or re-creating a 'sense of arrival' along approach roads into villages, through the planting of groups or avenues of trees, and the restoration or building of stone boundary walls for new buildings.

New Planting

Reflect local pattern of woodlands, copses and hedgerows.

Avoid rear garden fences, and boundaries defined by buildings, walls and hedgerows.

Use of local indigenous species.

Retain existing landscape features such as woodland, hedgerows and specimen trees.

Create new footpath links to the existing network.

New planting to link with existing hedgerows and woodland.

Retain important views out. Frame and create new views.

Avoid bland, repetitive building arrangements.

New planting breaks up building mass.

Retain footpath links to open countryside.

Planting along approach road conveys a sense of arrival.



Within Settlements

Landscaping within new development should be used to create interest and integrate with the immediate surroundings and the wider countryside by:

Conserving existing features and habitats through appropriately designed site layouts, landscaping schemes and management plans.

Creating native hedgerows and planting specimen trees within and around developments to link properties and define boundaries.

Creating or framing views into and out of the settlement site.

Providing new public open space as landscape features and for recreational use. This may provide a focal point in larger developments and add to the overall amenities of a settlement.

3.2 SETTLEMENT PATTERN

Though frequently overlooked, an understanding of character at the street-scale is vital in the design of any new development. The positioning of a single new building can be important in maintaining the character of an existing street scene. However, the opportunities will be greater on larger development sites where the actual street layout has to be determined.

To be successful, those involved in the design process will need to appreciate fully the characteristics and form of settlements. Highway standards need to be applied in an imaginative and pragmatic manner if the problems, that have eroded character in the past, are to be overcome.

Settlement Checklist

Settlement Form and Street Layout

New development should maintain the settlement form and conserve or enhance the appearance of the built village edge by:

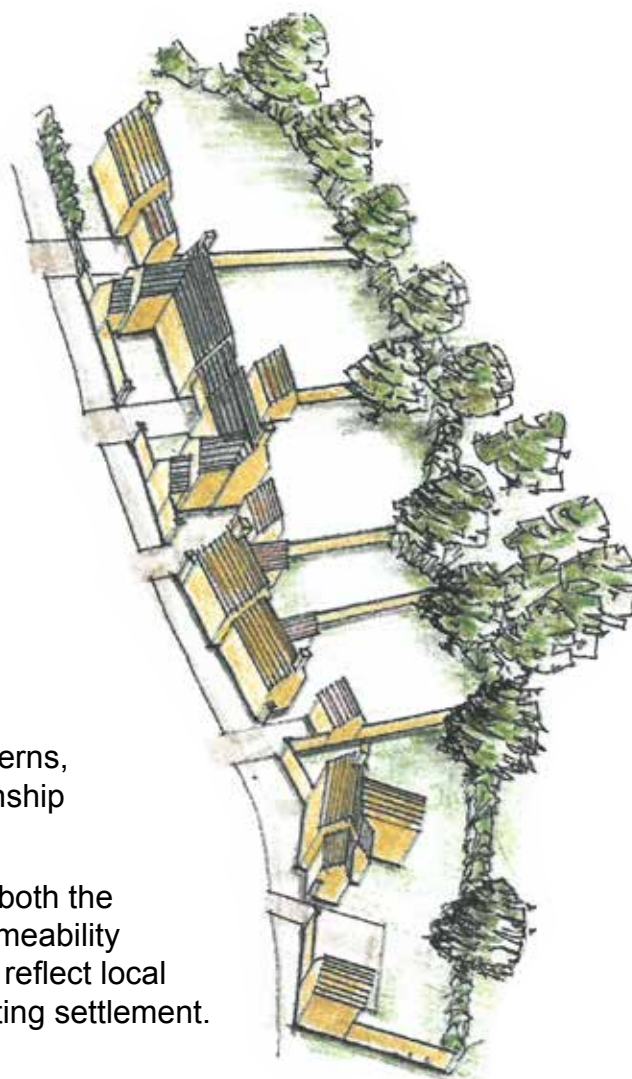
Respecting traditional settlement form and ensuring that new development maintains the character of the existing street pattern.

Maintaining, improving or redefining settlement edges, particularly on prominent approaches.

New development can provide an opportunity to enhance views of the settlement edge from the countryside.

Designing new road layouts to reflect traditional patterns, in which the spatial enclosure created by the relationship of the buildings to one another is paramount.

Providing a variety of routes and pedestrian links to both the existing settlement and within the development. Permeability within a development is essential to reduce car use, reflect local character and fully integrate new areas into the existing settlement.



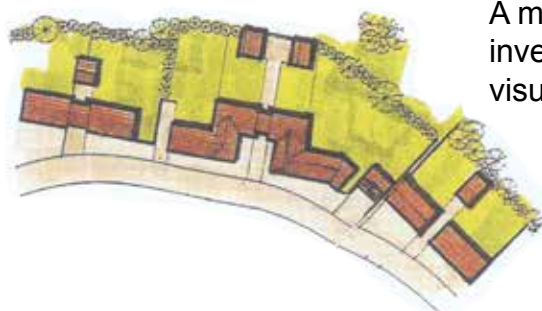
Spaces Between Buildings

New development should seek to reflect the existing spatial qualities within settlements by:

Providing links with adjacent areas of the settlement and by creating attractive views into and out of the development.

Ensuring that new buildings respect the existing spatial form. This may typically involve maintaining a strong sense of enclosure with an almost continuous street frontage of buildings, walls and hedges. Alternatively, in settlements where buildings are dispersed, this may involve maintaining a more open character such as a village green.

Buildings, walls and hedges may be used to create an enclosed and varied public space.



A mixture of parking solutions should be investigated with the aim of reducing the visual impact of the car.

Character of public spaces created by relationship of buildings to each other.

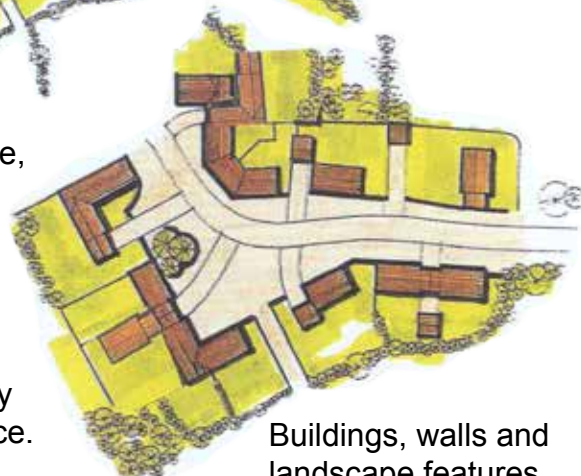


A constantly changing view creates visual interest.



Public open space properly integrated within streetscene, in a prominent usable location.

Informal supervision provided by housing fronting onto open space.



Buildings, walls and landscape features positioned to enclose space and create visual interest.

Layouts should be designed to reduce the visual impact of the car. Parking provision for individual plots may be screened by walls or located to the rear or side of properties and accessed through carriage arches or gateways between buildings. The repeated use of standard house designs with integral garages and parking on drives in front of houses is an inappropriate form of development.

General Points

Planting of native tree and hedgerow species to integrate into wider country side setting.

Enhancing external edge and gateway from countryside.

Clearly defined but compatible edge with adjacent open countryside.

Roads designed to reflect traditional pattern.

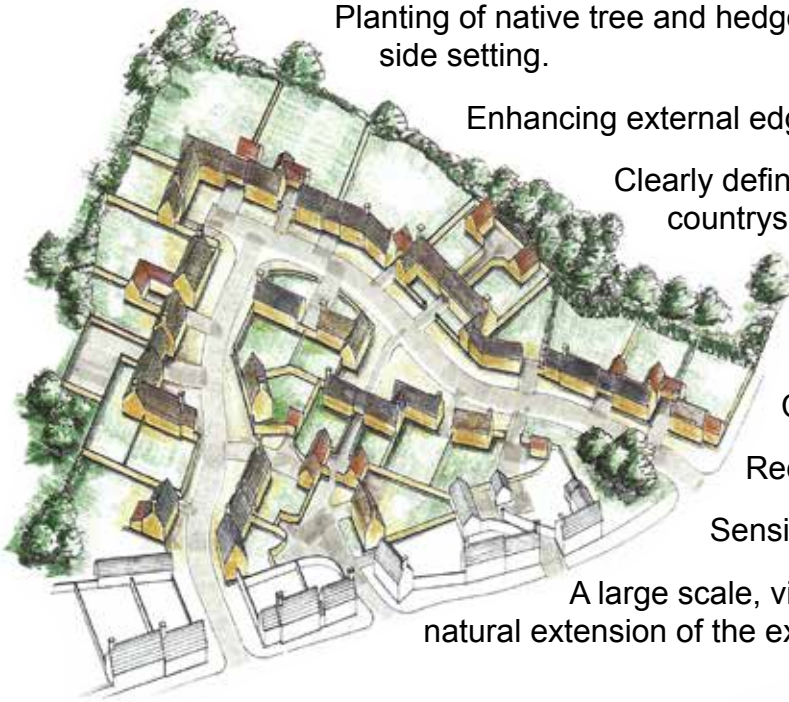
Creating a choice of routes.

Creating a sense of place.

Reducing the visual impact of the car.

Sensitive use of highway standards.

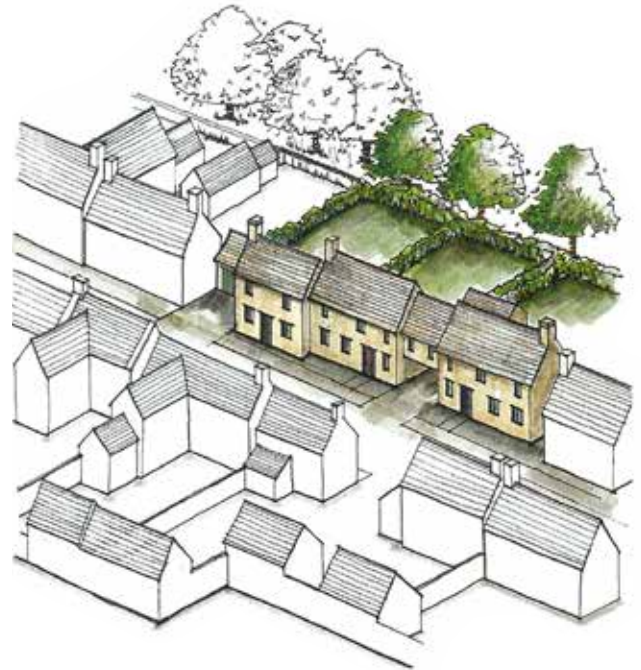
A large scale, village-edge development should appear as a natural extension of the existing settlement.



Consider alternative ways in which highway standards may be manipulated to encourage more sensitive design solutions. The use of standard road treatments should be avoided in favour of more appropriate paving surfaces or materials. The impact of street lighting may be reduced by fixing directly to buildings, subject to discussion with the appropriate Street Lighting Authority. Changes in footway width, and curves in the road, maybe used to provide variety within the street scene.

Creating a sense of place and focal points in larger new developments. This may involve incorporating a variety of spaces, with buildings enclosing streets, squares and courtyards, or positioned to provide landmarks and vistas. Further interest may be provided by variations in ridgelines and occasionally positioning buildings gable-end on to the footway.

New development should be designed to reflect the existing relationship between buildings, street layout and settlement edge. New development should be designed to achieve a sense of community by including the creation of a pleasant and safe environment for people to meet and socialise, both formally and informally.



A small scale development should reflect the character of the existing street scene



Developments in the county which reflect the character of the existing settlement.

Residential Roads

Changes in footway width and curves in the road may be used to provide variety.

In designing the spaces between buildings and the road layout key points for consideration are :

Changes in footway width.

Variable carriageway width may be acceptable, other than as part of a major access road.

Street width adjacent to a road junction.

All new properties fronting a street should have adequate parking.

The width of shared access between properties.

The Highways Authority welcomes early discussions about such points.

3.3 BUILDING STYLE

An understanding of the vernacular building style of the county is an essential prerequisite if new development is to be designed to respect the local character. This does not imply that all new buildings should be faithful copies of the past, but that they should draw their basic design principles from the scale, form, materials and details of the local vernacular. The design of new development should demonstrate an appreciation of the traditional buildings of the county and seek to harmonise with them using modern building techniques.

The following checklist is intended as a guide and not as a list of standards to be rigidly applied to all new development. The extent to which any one aspect applies will vary depending on the immediate context in which the development is to be sited. Infill development within a village centre, for example, will most probably take its design references from adjacent buildings, and scale, form, materials and details may closely reflect the immediate context. Larger settlement-edge developments, on the other hand, may be created with more of their own character, within the overall context of the character of the village.

New development should demonstrate an appreciation of the traditional building style of the area, and respect the scale and form of adjacent buildings.



It is essential, therefore, that a thorough analysis of the context underpins the design principles of any development proposals.

Building Checklist

Building Form and Scale

The scale of new buildings should respect that of neighbouring properties and the spaces between them



The form of new buildings and extensions or additions to existing buildings should reflect that of the local vernacular. This will typically include: -

A rectangular plan form with limited gable widths.



Steeply pitched gabled roofs, often greater than fifty degrees which span the narrower plan dimension.



Additional floor space may be provided in the form of additions or extensions, which appear subordinate to the principal building. These will often be in the form of single and two storey projections to the rear of the principal building, forming L or T shaped plans, or lean-to and gabled extensions to the side. Additional space within the roof area may also be achieved with the use of appropriately designed dormers that should be subservient in scale to the windows below.



A variety of building types from single storey outbuildings to three storey houses.



Building Materials

Walling and roofing materials should be selected which are traditionally used in the area in general, with local variations in particular settlements.

Walling

It is especially important to use natural stone, in the form of either limestone or ironstone, particularly where new development is proposed in existing streetscenes where stone is the dominant material. Natural stone should be used in the following manner:

Dressed or rubble stone laid in courses of stones of uniform height but varying lengths, with each course being random in height to the one above and below. The joints pointed with a lime based mortar, which should be slightly recessed from the arises of the stonework, with a brushed or rubbed finish, which exposes the aggregates.

Details may include the use of stone quoins, lintels, drip mouldings and window surrounds. The aprons of bay or bow windows should be built from dressed stone and not rubble.

In situations where artificial reconstituted stone is considered acceptable, it should be of a colour and laid in a manner similar to natural stone of the area.

The use of brick in new developments should reflect the use of the material within local settlements. Where brick is used it should be carefully matched to existing brick buildings to ensure consistency with traditional colour, texture and surface finish.

Roofing

Roofing materials are an essential part of the distinctive character of the county. The roof covering in new development should be carefully selected to ensure that the character of the area is not compromised by the use of inappropriate materials.

New development, particularly on infill sites adjacent to neighbouring traditional properties, should use traditional natural roofing materials, typically stone slate and blue slate. Clay pantiles are more appropriate on single storey extensions and outbuildings, such as garages. Where thatch is proposed it should be long straw with simple flush, wrap-over ridges. In situations where artificial slates are considered acceptable, they should be laid in a manner which reflects that of the natural material.



Building Details

Windows

Windows are an important element in the overall design of a building, so careful consideration should be given to the window type, size, position and details.

Windows used in new development should reflect the following local characteristics:

The proportion of window opening to solid wall varies according to the architectural styles and traditions of the period and in a new scheme the relationship between these elements should be in keeping with the style and elevations predominant in the area.

Individual elements within window openings generally have a vertical emphasis.

Window frames are recessed from the face of the external wall.

Upper storey windows are generally smaller in height and width than those at ground floor level.

Top hung fanlights are not appropriate in a traditional setting.

In the case of sash windows, the use of margin lights and tripartite sashes may be considered where appropriate to the locality.



Doors

The doors and canopies in new buildings should reflect the character of those traditionally used in the area.

Typical designs include:

Simple vertical boarded ledged and braced doors.

Framed, ledged and braced doors.

Panelled doors.

Simple lean-to pitched or flat roofed canopies.



Eaves and Verges

The details of the eaves and verges should reflect those which are typical of the area. The eaves and ridge heights should have regard to those of adjacent properties.

Decorative bargeboards, fascia boards and exposed rafter feet should only be used where these can be found in the local area.

The following characteristic features of eaves and verge details should be used:

Simple overhanging verges, with no undercloak.

Coped gable parapets.

Black painted metal rainwater goods, with gutters mounted on rise and fall stirrup brackets, spiked directly into the wall.



Dormers

Where required, the type of dormer should be appropriate to the type of roofing material used and should not be a dominant feature in the roof. Dormer windows should usually comprise simple casements.



Rooflights

In situations where rooflights are necessary, the low profile flush fitting type with a vertical emphasis should be used, as it minimises disruption to the appearance of the roof. The dimensions of the rooflight require careful consideration and where possible the rear slope should be used.



Chimney Stacks

Chimney stacks are prominent features commonly found throughout the county and play an important architectural role in the composition of a building. They punctuate the rooflines and provide visual interest. Their inclusion on new buildings should be considered.

The following characteristics typical of chimney stacks should be used:

Positioned on the ridge line of the roof either off centre or against one or both flank walls.

Flank wall stacks have internal flues, which are flush with the gable wall.

Rectangular in plan form.

Constructed of dressed stone or brick.



Energy Efficient Designs

Energy efficient buildings can make a very positive contribution to broad based environmental conservation and, where the most effective technological solutions to energy efficiency are being proposed, it is recognised that sometimes new ideas may require a re-appraisal of traditional concepts. It is important, however, that the design of new buildings should be considered within the broad guidelines set out in this document and combining energy efficient solutions with traditional design requirements provides designers with an opportunity for innovation and exciting solutions for schemes.

Chapter 4 THE RE-USE OF EXISTING TRADITIONAL BUILDINGS

This chapter considers the re-use and conversion of farm and other redundant buildings. This includes all buildings which are constructed largely of local materials and which can make a positive contribution to their environment.

Character Description

Historic and traditional farm buildings are an important aspect of both the open countryside and settlements within the county.

Historic buildings in farm complexes date predominantly from 1750 to 1850 and vary in form from random layouts to the formally planned farms arranged around one or more courtyards. They are almost uniformly of a substantial construction, in stone, with the later 19th century buildings occasionally constructed in a rich mid-red brick. Brick detailing of arches, quoins, cills and dentils is evident on stone buildings of the early 19th century. Farm buildings include granaries, open cart sheds, cattle and calf sheds, stables and, occasionally, pigsties, dovecotes and bull pens. Many village properties also had barns and storage buildings for non-domestic use attached to the house or on their land. These are now increasingly included in the accommodation of the house or developed as separate dwellings.

Small towns and villages vary in the extent to which farm complexes lie within the settlement, depending on land ownership patterns and the date of the enclosure of the parish. Early enclosure tended to result in more farms within the village; later enclosure led to dispersed farmsteads in the open countryside.

With changes in farming practices and economic factors, there are now increasing numbers of farm buildings and domestic barns and stables becoming redundant for which conversion represents a viable economic proposition. Because of their numbers, locations, and often sheer size, their sympathetic re-use has the potential to make a significant impact on the built environment of the area.

As well as farm buildings there are significant numbers of non-domestic buildings, mainly dating from the 19th century, both in the villages and, in the case of mill complexes, in the open countryside. It will be important to find suitable new uses for these buildings as they become redundant, if the rich complexity and texture of the area is to be retained.

Such buildings include:

Smithies, breweries, maltings, mills, small agricultural implement engineering works

Garages, depots and railway buildings

Chapels

School buildings

Village clubs and halls

Shops and pubs



Design Implications

In re-using a farm complex, careful attention needs to be paid to keeping the spatial integrity of the farm by retaining and re-using all the buildings, not only the main barns, but also the small sheds and hovels.

It should always be possible to clearly discern a building's former use, after conversion, by carefully retaining its definitive features.

The conversion process should make it a priority to work with the constraints, and exploit the opportunities, which the building presents, thus avoiding imposing formulaic solutions, which disregard the building's previous functions and its form.

Conversions should:

Utilise existing openings to provide access and light, aiming to introduce the minimum of new openings, which would compromise the plain, utilitarian symmetry of the building.

Leave roof pitches uninterrupted by chimneys, dormers and other features foreign to the building type.

Avoid introducing conspicuous and incongruous new elements, such as garages and conservatories.

Avoid divisions between properties within a whole farm conversion, which do not have any relationship to the historic divisions.

Retain and re-use any historic yard or threshing barn surfacing, such as cobbles, stones on edge, blue brick stable pavements or red bricks.



As a general rule the more simple the design for conversion, the more likely it is to retain the essential character.

As with farm buildings it should always be possible to discern, after conversion, the nature and original purpose of other redundant buildings. This is similarly achieved by the development process properly acknowledging and respecting the character and constraints of the existing structure and any special features, which are particular to their former function.



Examples of conversions which respect previous functions and form.

Chapter 5 THE WAY AHEAD

This Northamptonshire Design Guide highlights the distinctive character of Northamptonshire that should be for future generations to enjoy. It provides an understanding of the county's built characteristics and points to how new buildings can be designed to respect tradition. It will be very important in developing a constructive dialogue about new development in the county and, from this, it will be possible to pursue the common interest of successfully building on tradition.

Its successful application will depend on future work by many different individuals and organisations. Various interest groups can play an important part in meeting its objectives:

Local communities can use this Design Guide to assist in formulating their comments on planning applications and, provide a framework for their own Local Neighbourhood Plan.

Parish Councils can use the Design Guide when consulted about planning applications or invited to participate in the preparation of plans or documents affecting the built environment in their area.

Developers can use the Design Guide at an early stage to help development appraisals and prepare planning applications, which respect the traditions of the Northamptonshire Countryside.

Individuals can use the Design Guide as a reference point and to help formulate ideas that are likely to be more acceptable when they come to submit proposals to alter or extend their dwelling or in the construction of new buildings.

All developments will need to comply with the policies of the Joint Core Strategy of the North Northants or West Northants Joint Planning Units, A further useful reference would be to the Government sponsored publication "Building for Life 12" published by Nottingham Trent University.

The county's existing buildings are amongst its most attractive features, and it is vital that, to protect and promote the distinctive character of Northamptonshire, new buildings should be designed in a way that makes a positive contribution to the county's character.



Market towns provide an important set of facilities for their surrounding villages.

Photograph by courtesy of Brackley Photographics

CONTACT DETAILS

For all planning matters, including Local Plan policy, building conservation advice and site specific planning contact the appropriate planning authority

East Northamptonshire Council,
East Northamptonshire House,
Cedar Drive,
Thrapston, NN14 4LZ
01832 742000

Corby Borough Council,
Deene House,
New Post Office Square,
Corby, NN17 1GD
01536 402551

Kettering Borough Council,
Bowling Green Road,
Kettering, NN15 7QX
01536 410333

Daventry District Council,
Lodge Road,
Daventry, NN11 4PP
01327 871100

Borough of Wellingborough,
Swanspool House,
Doddington Road,
Wellingborough, NN8 1BP
01933 231933

South Northamptonshire District Council.
The Forum,
Moat Lane,
Towcester, NN12 6AD
01327 322237

For Strategic Planning matters contact the appropriate Joint Planning Unit :-

North Northamptonshire JPU.
c/o East Northamptonshire Council.

West Northamptonshire JPU.
c/o South Northamptonshire Council.

For highway design guidance or heritage information contact :-

Northamptonshire County Council,
Angel Street,
Northampton,
NN1 1ED

or telephone 0300 126 1000
and ask for the department you want.

CPRE Northamptonshire would welcome your feedback on this document, contact us at: -

CPRE Northamptonshire,
The Weatsheaf,
Spring Hill Farm,
Harborough Road,
Pitsford, NN6 9AA

telephone
01604 780000

e-mail
info@CPRENorthants.org.uk

Northamptonshire is a county of landscape contrasts with buildings and materials that reflect local traditions and provide variety and interest in the many small towns and villages. The county's historic settlements in their countryside setting of pasture, hedgerow and parkland represent a unique resource which should be respected when development is proposed.

Inappropriate development threatens the county's character and the setting of settlements within the landscape. Their form, layout and building traditions are at risk of being undermined by schemes that do not acknowledge and respect the traditional character of the county.

The Northamptonshire Countryside Design Guide has been written to provide advice to all those who are intending to build within the county and for those who have an interest in the county's environment. Development should respect the unique character of the county and build on the traditions that contribute towards its distinctiveness. It draws on the past and provides a context for the future.



**A recent development where the new houses
blend in well with the rest of the village.**

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by the Margaret Giffen Charitable Trust.

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