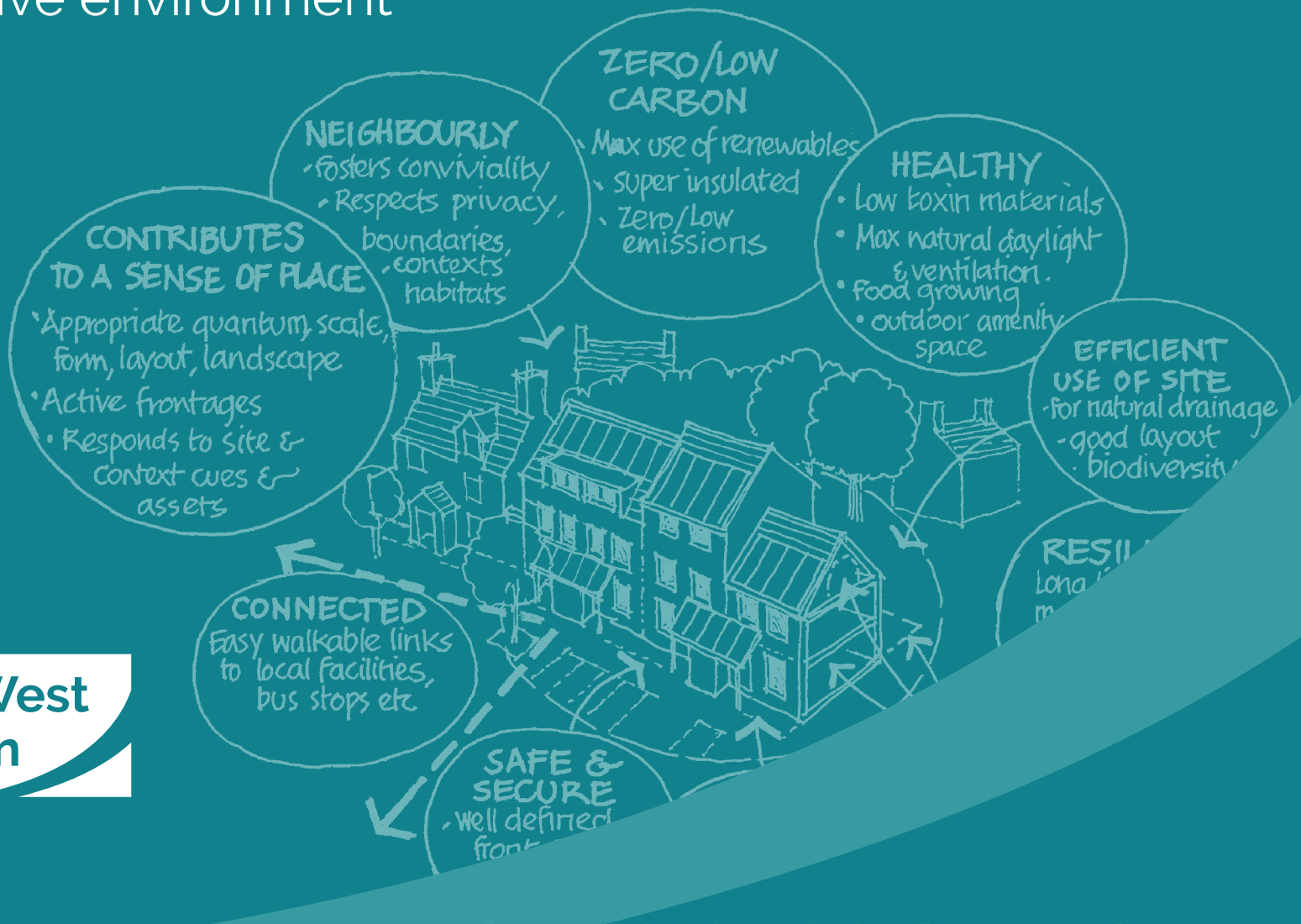
DESIGN GUIDE

For a zero carbon, healthy, resilient and distinctive environment



Somerset West and Taunton

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Foreword

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1.0 INTRODUCTION
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3.0 CONTEXT & DISTINCTIVENESS
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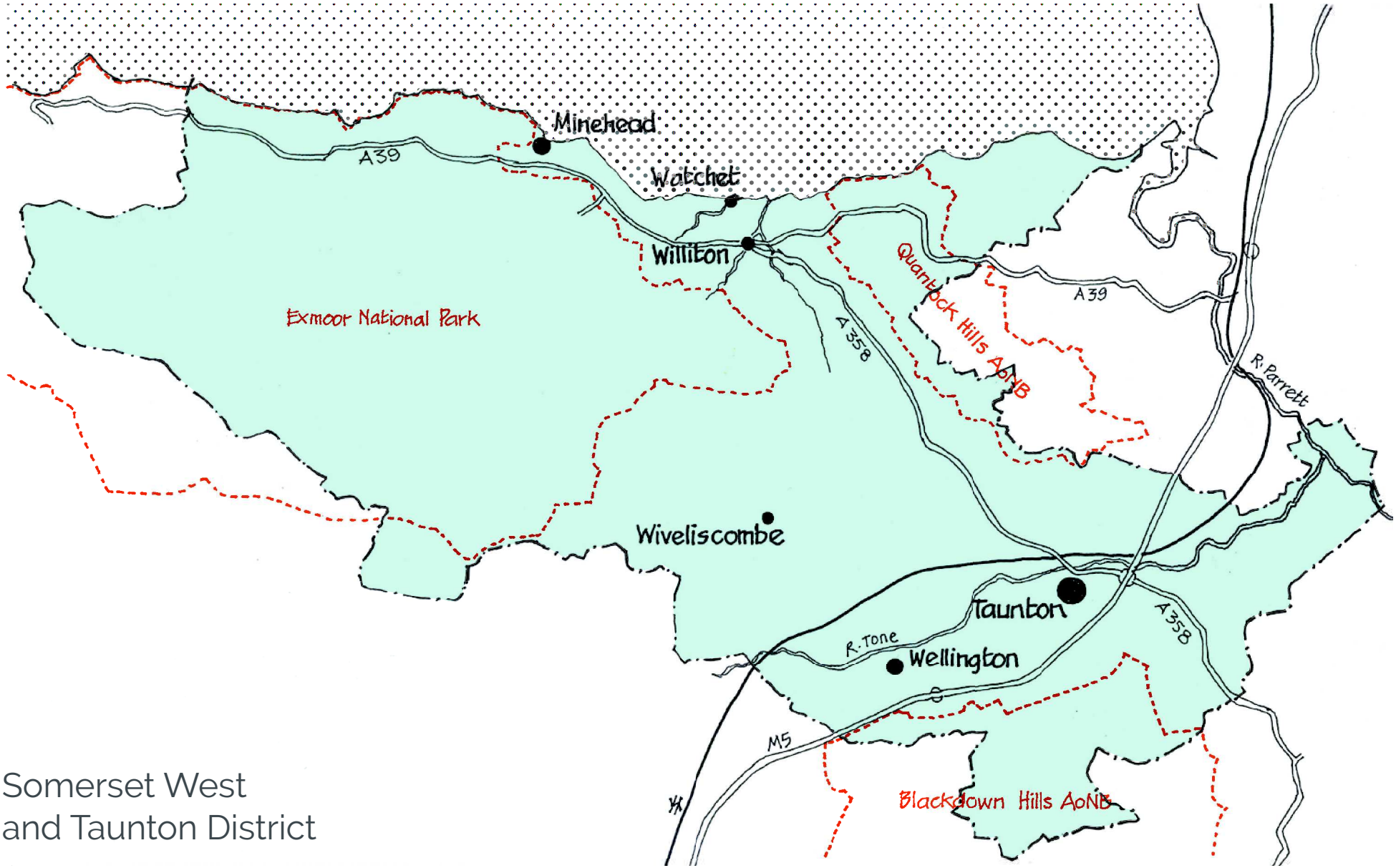
1.0 INTRODUCTION



Somerset West and Taunton District

Why is a Design Guide necessary?
It is clear from public opinion in the District, that people value the character and appearance of the area and that they want the design of new development to be locally distinctive. The outstanding nature of the landscape and its relationship with the towns and villages in Somerset West and Taunton impart a special quality which should be cherished. Indeed, this is reflected in the Exmoor National Park, the Quantock Hills and Blackdown Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the numerous Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings, reflecting the quality of much of the built environment.

However, the area faces challenges; the need to build more houses, to address the significant shortfall in the supply of homes for all, the need to create neighbourhoods, with a sense of place, and the need to build resilience in our new development in the face of the effects of climate change, especially flooding, and to build healthy and sustainable places, reducing our reliance on car based transport and to maximise the use of renewable energy sources.

Above all, the challenge is to create built environments which are responsive to everyone, regardless of age, ability, gender and income, and which are sustainable and resilient, in a way which creates the valued heritage of the future.

National Planning and design policy underline the need for local authorities to ensure that the quality of the design of new development is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of local areas and to incorporate the principles of placemaking, to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods. These aims are reflected within the context of Somerset West and Taunton through the Local Plan, adopted in ( ).

Both the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Design Guide advocate that local authorities produce design guides and design codes as a means to achieve a higher quality of development which addresses the aims above.

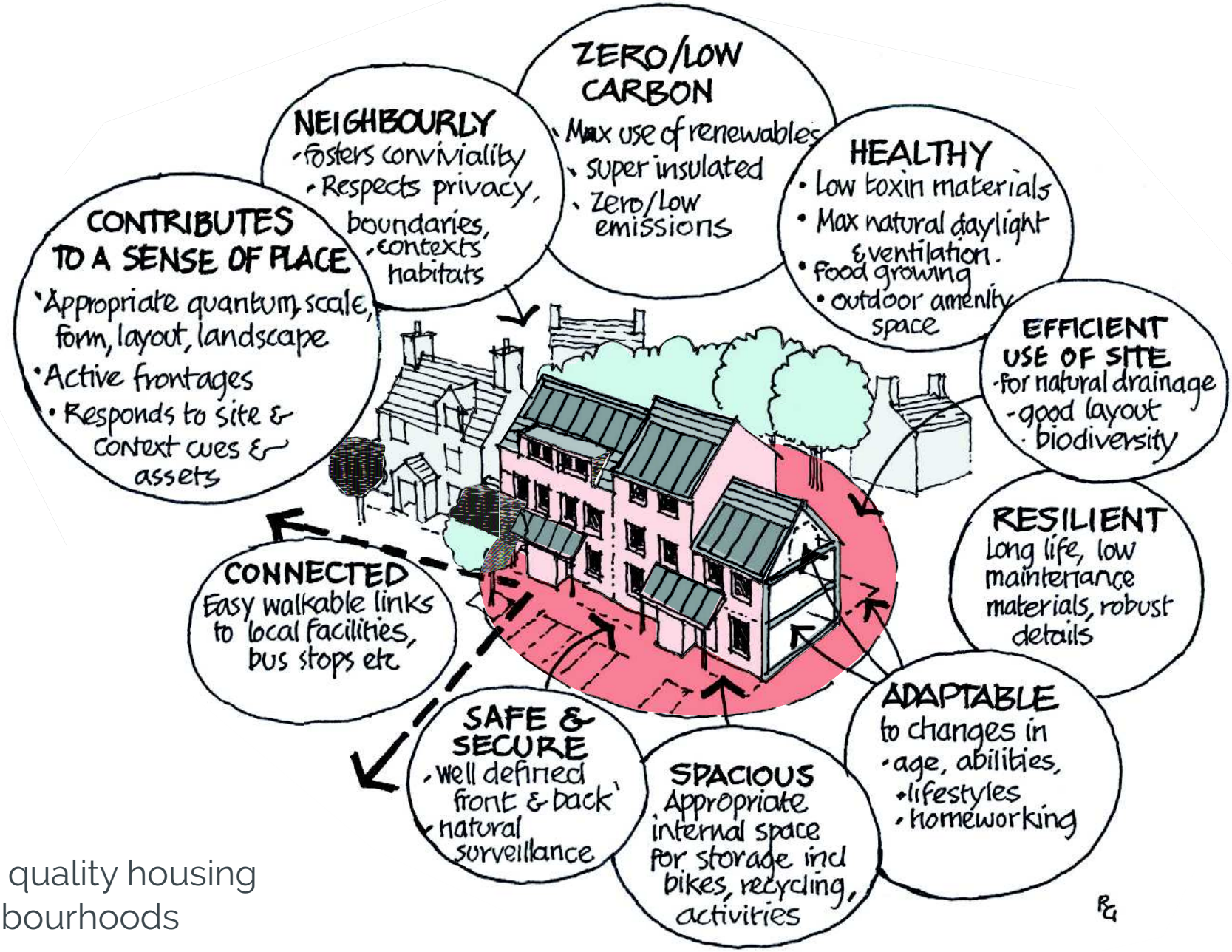
The aims of improved design in the district are summarised in the diagram on the next page.

"Beat dolor sinus ut eat aut excest alitat or abore nit antiaecab in eatiore, solli em ex et alique rende quas aceri consequi omnim et venimagnimus inulpa que paruptas poremposs."
National Planning Policy Framework

"Dinus ut eat aut excest alitat or abore nit antiaecab in eatiore, solli em ex et alique rende quas aceri consequi omnim et venimagnimus inulpa que paruptas poremposs."
National Design Guide

"Fabore nit antiaecab in eatiore, solli em ex et alique rende quas aceri consequi omnim et venimagnimus inulpa que paruptas."
Somerset West & Taunton Local Plan

"Fabore nit antiaecab in eatiore, solli em ex et alique rende quas aceri consequi omnim et venimagnimus inulpa que parupt."
Somerset West & Taunton Climate Emergency policy



Achieving quality housing and neighbourhoods

What is a Design Guide?

This guide illustrates how the council's aspirations for maintaining and improving the quality of design can be achieved. It explains some key principles, such as placemaking and illustrates examples through indicative drawings. It demonstrates that many measures to reduce the harmful effects of climate change can be addressed within the context of good design and placemaking. It also attempts to show how current principles of highway design and layout can be incorporated into good placemaking.

What is its scope?

The Design Guide is predominantly focussed on the range of new build residential development at all scales. However, the main recommendations and suggested design process are relevant to the majority of development types. The Guide also addresses the conversion and extension of existing buildings, whether heritage assets or not.

The Design Guide covers the whole of the Somerset West and Taunton area, including the area designated as the Taunton Garden Town, (TGT), the Quantock Hills and the Blackdown Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (and that part of the Exmoor National Park lying within the council area?).

Taunton Garden Town information

For development proposals within the Taunton Garden Town area this Guide should be consulted as part of the suite of design guidance which also includes the *TGT Vision document*, the *Design Charter and Checklist* and the *Public Realm Design Guide*, all of which have been adopted as policy.

What is its Status?

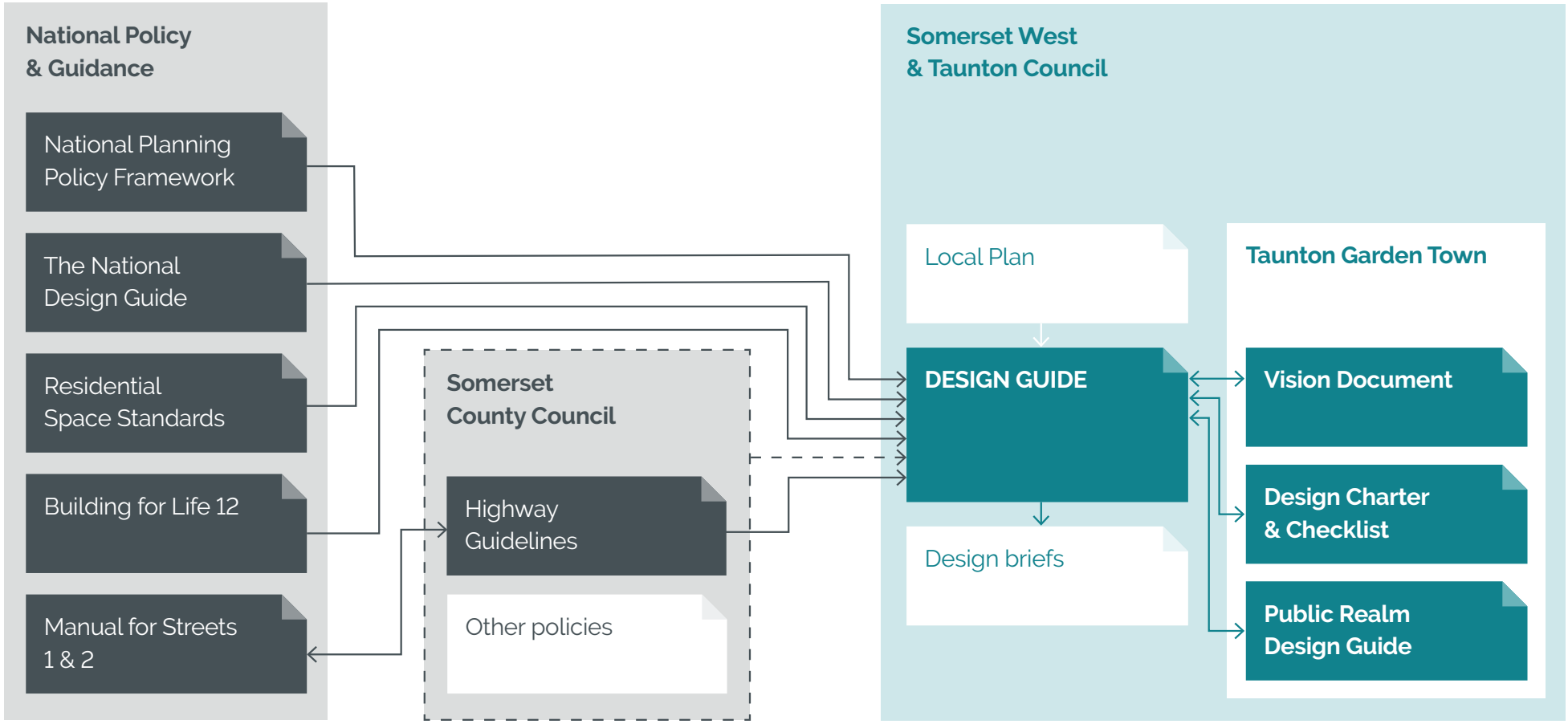
The Design Guide is intended to be adopted by Somerset West and Taunton Council as a Supplementary Planning Document. It is therefore currently a material consideration in determining planning proposals and applications.

It is essential that applicants consult all relevant policies of the adopted Local Plans prior to using this Guide. For example, within the adopted West Somerset Local Plan – Policy NH13: Securing High Standards of Design and in the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan – Policy D7: Design Quality, to which this Guide relates. Other policies on climate change, sustainability, housing and heritage are relevant, as well as those relating to a particular application.

Who is it for?

It is intended that the guide will be a useful source of reference, for applicants, developers, designers, planning officers, highway engineers, elected council members, the community and other stakeholders

Policy context



How should it be used?
The guide has been compiled with the intention of being a springboard for good design, sensitive to its context, not a straightjacket requiring strict adherence to a particular aesthetic. The drawings and illustrations are indicative but are not exhaustive in terms of design response. Quality contemporary design solutions are to be welcomed, within the context of the process below.

What is strongly advocated in the guide is the requirement for designers to demonstrate an accessible 'narrative' illustrating the logic of their design response to local context. Therefore, the guide places some emphasis on a process which can form the structure to such a narrative, namely the sequence of a statement of aims, appraisal of context and site, the design concept which addresses the foregoing and the development of the final scheme.

The designer, in addressing these should find that consultations with the local community and planning officers have a sound basis. Moreover, the narrative should form the basis of the contents of a Design and Access Statement (and, where applicable, a Heritage Impact Statement, Flood Risk Statement etc) which is a formal requirement of this authority for all(?) applications.

Planning officers will also find the process useful in providing an agenda for design discussions with applicants and subsequently items for the framing of decisions.

Further information

Moreover, this guide should be read within the context of relevant policies within the Local Plan, other guidance, such as Guides for design in Exmoor National Park, and the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Local Development Order design briefing for Employment Buildings (?), Highways guidance, and, where they exist, Conservation Area Character Appraisals, Village Design Statements and design briefs and codes relating to specific development areas.

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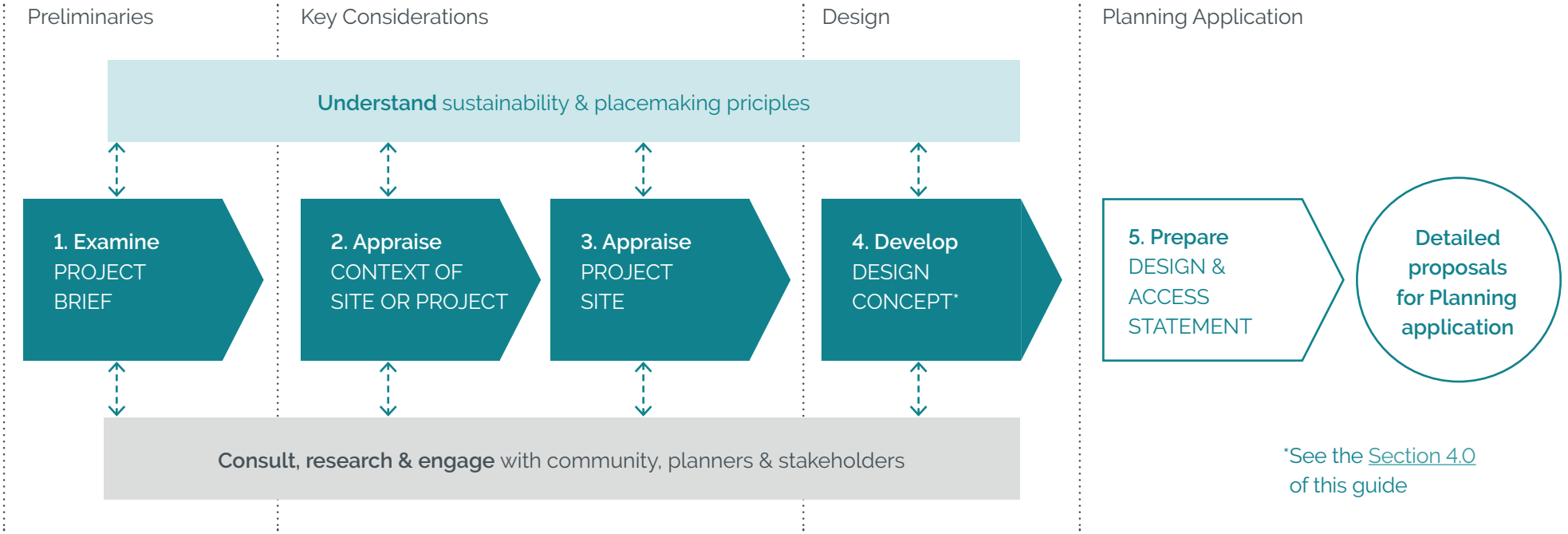
2.0 THE DESIGN PROCESS

2.1 Introduction

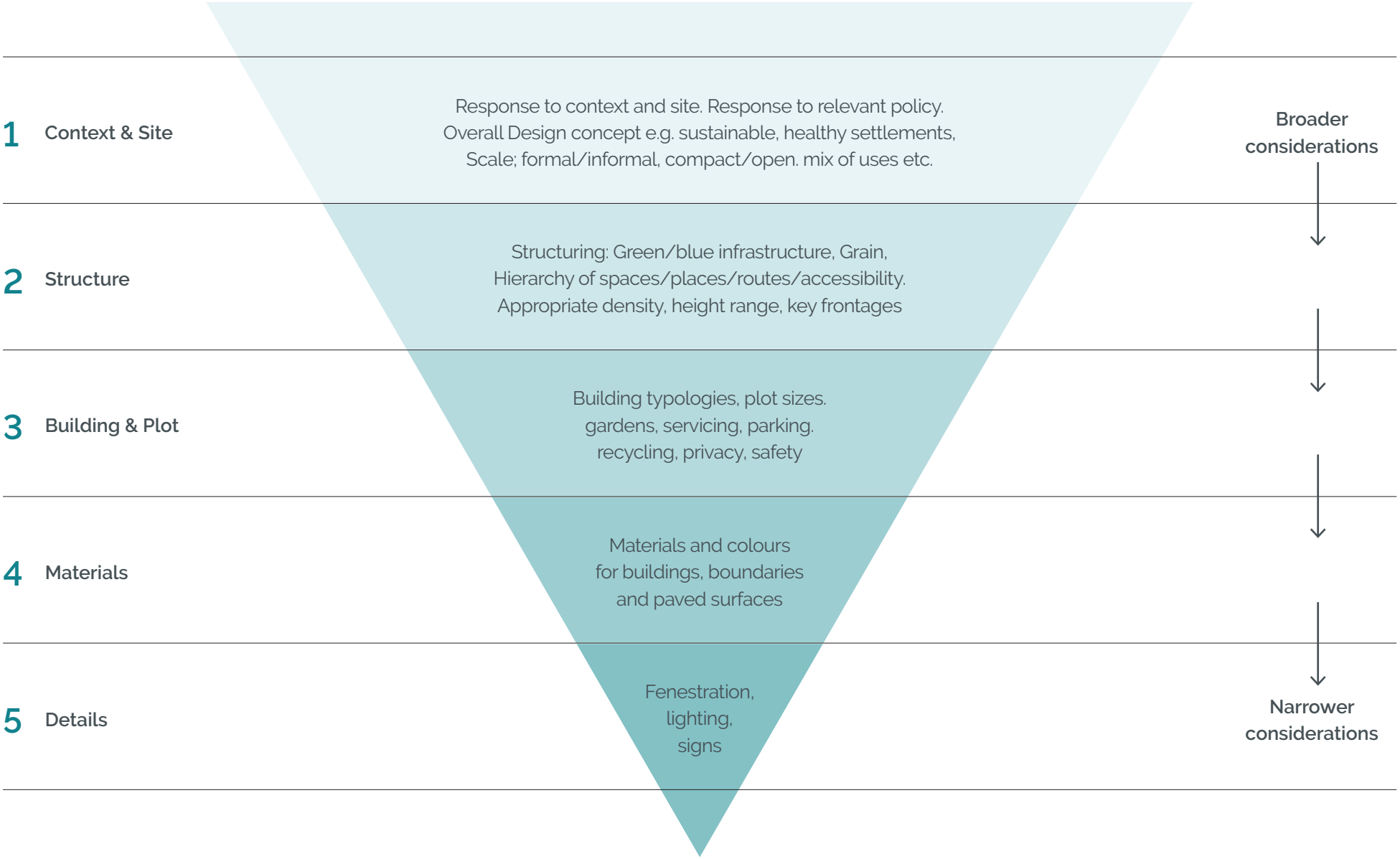
The following stages in the development of a design should be addressed by applicants. They will be useful in making an application, in drawing up an accompanying Design & Access Statement and in negotiation with planning officers and the local community.

The recommended Design Process



*See the Section 4.0 of this guide

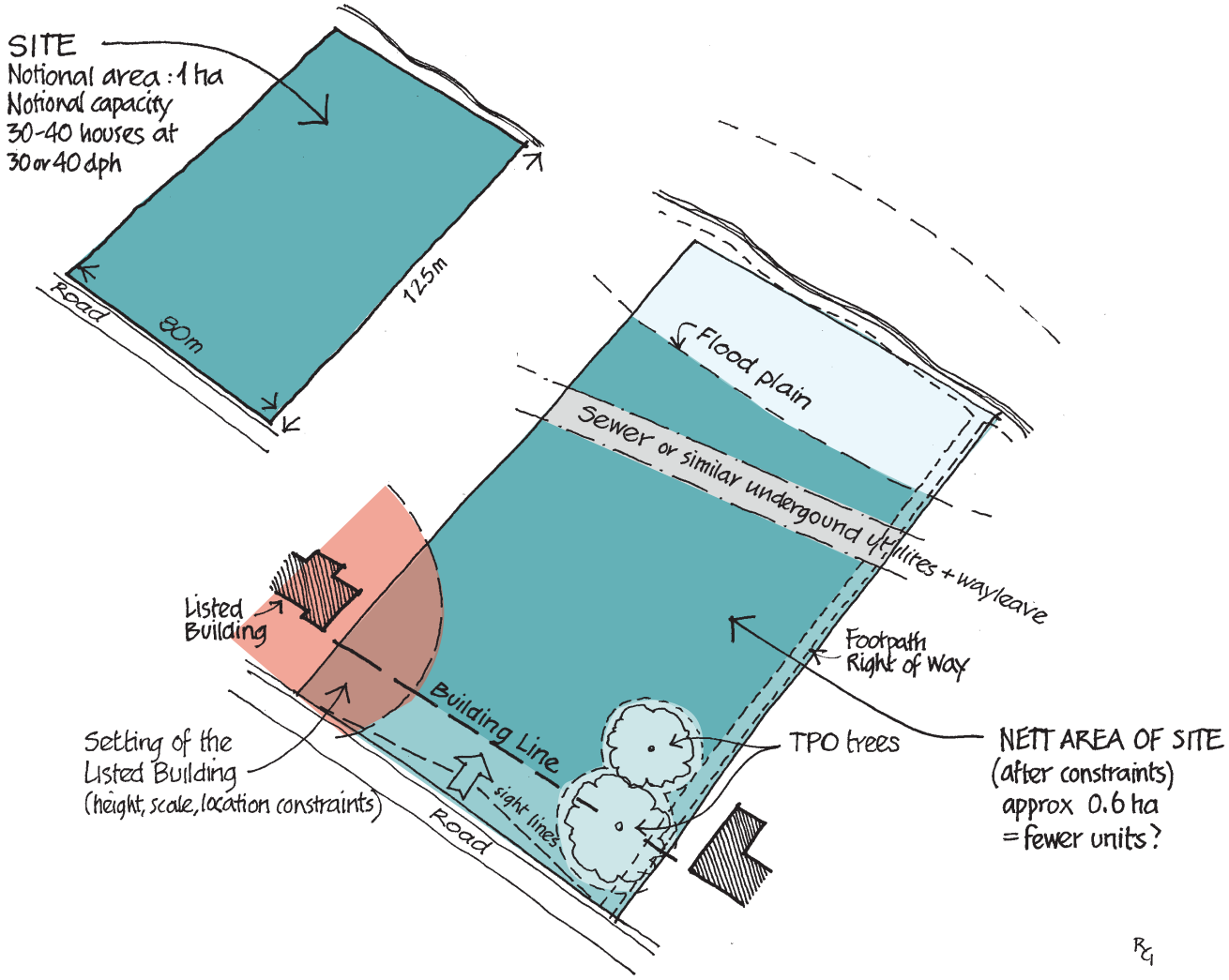
Sequence of considerations for design appraisal, negotiations & design statements



2.2 Preliminaries

This will be a statement of the requirements of the developer, in terms of development type/land use (residential, commercial, etc), number of units and/or development area/ volume, tenure/intended user, etc. It will be expected that the requirements will have regard to local planning and other policies and the constraints of the site. In many cases, the effect of site constraints and policy requirements may limit the developable area to something less than the total site area.

It is advisable to determine the nett area of a site (minus physical & policy constraints) at the outset of a project.



2.3 Appraisal of context and setting

2.3.1
Inevitably, the impact of development will be experienced beyond the limits of the site. This might range from the impact on the street scene to long views from distant uplands, in some cases from nationally significant landscapes, such as Exmoor National Park or the Quantocks Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The following factors are indicative as sites and contexts vary considerably.

2.3.2
Factors to take account of in the immediate vicinity of the site include:

- is the site within a conservation area or the setting of a conservation area or Heritage Asset (eg a Listed Building? see section xx. Is it within any other area of special value? (AONB or National Park).
- what is the scale, (including number of storeys), form, plot shape (and spaces between buildings), land uses of the buildings adjacent to the site?
- is there an important established building line which should be respected?
- what are the characteristic property boundaries in the vicinity?

2.3.3
Factors to take into account within the wider context of the site include:

- are there Key Views of the site from important vantage points?
- what are the characteristic features of the locally distinctive buildings within the settlement, such as form, appearance, layout and materials?
- what are the most convenient (existing and potential) walking routes to local facilities (shops, schools, bus stops, etc) from the site?

2.3.4
The context of some sites might be suburban in character, for example housing estates developed between about the interwar period up to about 2000. Whilst these are desirable to their residents, the wide standardised road layouts and housing layouts and materials draw little on the character of the area.

Nowadays, highway standards permit more flexible approaches to street and road design which can be more appropriate to the established character of the area. Similarly, planning policies and approaches to design also stress a closer response to aspects which reinforce local distinctiveness. Therefore, in these cases, whilst the suburban context and character of a site should be acknowledged, the design response might be somewhat different, although the scale of its setting should be respected.

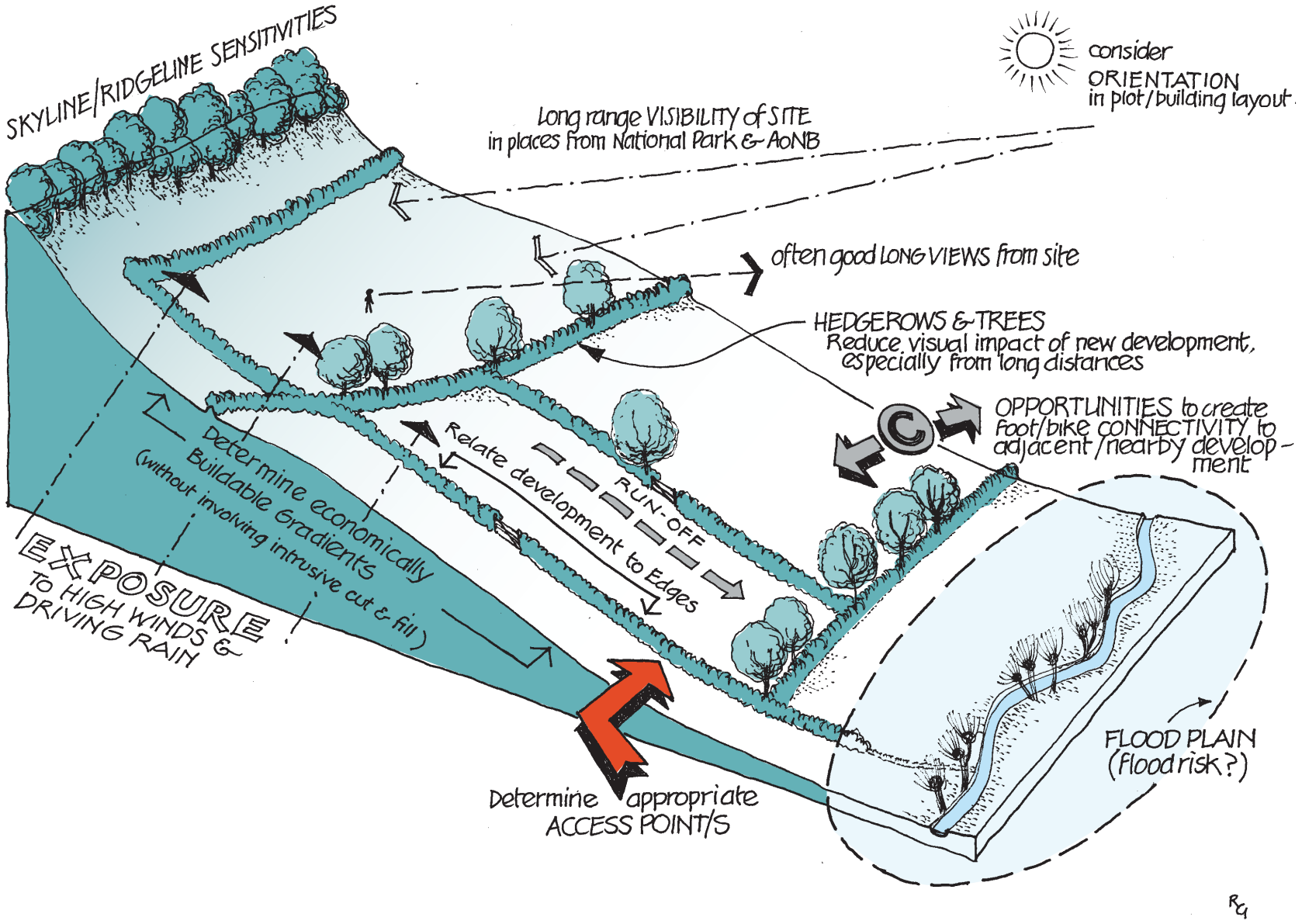
2.3.5
The context appraisal should be concise and preferably use a map-based analysis. The appraisal can be a couple of pages for a modest proposal, to a more comprehensive analysis for larger scaled developments. The notation sheet see fig xx will be useful in annotating a map to illustrate and locate the factors identified above. Additionally, captioned photographic images will enhance the appraisal.

2.4 Appraisal of the Site

2.4.1
The characteristics of a site will exert an influence on the layout and form of development. The response to those characteristics will determine significantly the distinctiveness of the design. The following factors are indicative, as the nature of sites vary considerably.

2.4.2
- Boundaries; the nature, (materials, vegetation), condition and height of all boundaries, particularly the street frontage, privacy/ overlooking/overshadowing issues.
- Access and connectivity. Main vehicular access point/s, existing/potential; pedestrian connectivity, existing/potential, to local facilities, open space etc.
- Contours/gradients, related to buildability reducing cut & fill, road gradients, drainage. Abrupt changes of level; archaeological interest?
- Ground conditions, including surfaces, existing trees (including TPOs) and hedges, drainage ditches.
- Existing buildings, structures. Heritages Assets, potential for re use, rehabilitation or recycling of materials.
- Services; overhead or underground utility lines and wayleaves for maintenance.
- Orientation (sun's path) views out, views in.

Many development sites will be located on hillsides requiring a 3-Dimensional response:



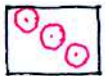
Appraisal Notation

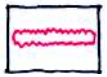
These symbols can be applied to context and site appraisal maps in order to pinpoint the aspects of positive and negative character of a site and its setting. Symbols are also shown to identify the location of basic neighbourhood facilities.

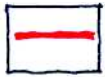

Sense of place or identity in small area

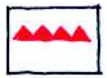

Significant green space


Significant tree group


Distinctive line of trees


Distinctive or typical hedge boundary

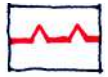

Distinctive or typical boundary wall (stone/brick)


Important roofline

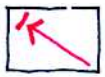

Tree/landscape skyline

Crest line


Slope (pointing up) steeper

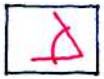

Significant edge (eg between land uses)


View to landmark


View terminated by building


Deflected view

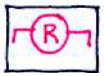
Glimpse view


Extensive view

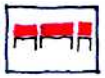

Good sense of street enclosure

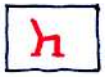

'Pinch point'


Pivotal corner



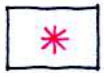
Rhythm: ie Pattern or repetitive features


Key / distinctive building /s (thick line on front)


Need for seating


Major landmark


Local landmark

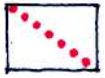

Feature of local interest eg street furniture


Surface texture eg setts

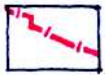
Abrupt change of level (in metres)

Height of building (No. of storeys)

Potential connection


Foot route

Noise area (ff) Quiet area (pp)


Distinctive building line


Key vacant site requiring quality development


Intrusive / 'Dead' frontage (specify)

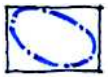

Hazard (specify)


Lack of enclosure


Poorly defined, 'left over' area or disorientation (specify)

Clutter (specify)


Dead end


Neighbourhood boundary


Sub-area in neighbourhood

Neighbourhood 'Gateway'

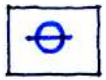
Local school

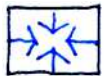
Community facility (specify)

Local group shop

Parking area

Area of play (informal/formal)


Bus stop


Meeting point

Heritage asset (specify)

2.5 Development of a Design Concept

2.5.1
This important stage in the process is where the conclusions drawn from stages 1-3 above inform the basic decisions about the character, appearance, design and layout of the scheme are expressed on a map/plan, preferably supported by sketches.

It is emphasised that this is not a detailed layout, but it will show the salient aspects of the proposed scheme, which can for the basis of early discussions with planning officers, local community and/or neighbours and any other stakeholders.

Basically, the design concept should answer the questions:

What is the general idea behind the design?

What will be its character?

How have the issues raised in the appraisal and in the general requirements of the brief been resolved in the aims of the design?

Section 4.0 should be consulted, to assist in addressing the points below.

2.5.2
Typical aspects of a Design Concept are shown below; they will differ in depth or relevance depending on the size of the development:

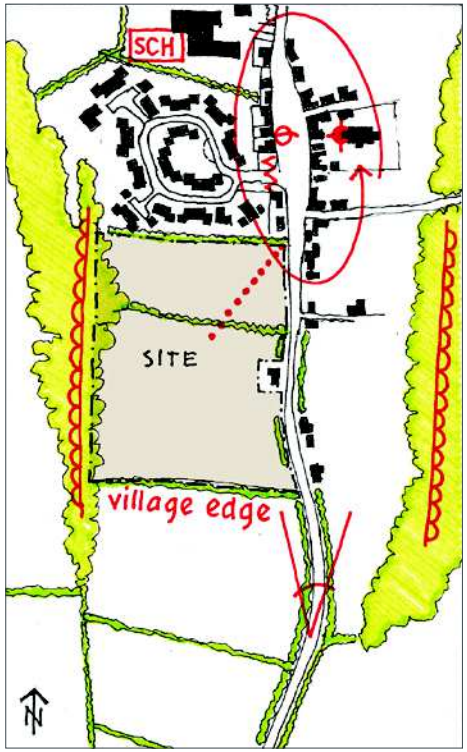
- Entry point/s to the development. How is the development to be entered? What will be the impact on the existing street scene? The entry point is important; it 'sets the scene' for the rest of the development yet has to have regard to the nature and scale of the existing development, especially if that is of traditional settlement form. The entry point should be chosen to minimise the need to create excessive sight lines which would necessitate substantial hedgerow or boundary wall removal.
- Frontage and boundary treatment. How will the development address its boundaries/will it be generally outward looking? Are there boundaries where privacy with adjacent neighbours will influence design and layout?
- Existing trees, hedges, structures or buildings to be retained and how these will influence the character, layout and form of the proposals.
- Location of focal points/features and key groups of buildings (in larger schemes in particular).
- Townscape character; areas of compact and looser grained built form, formal or informal; hierarchy of streets and spaces. Roofscape considerations.
- Location and function of open spaces; greens, squares, wide verges, tree planting, playspaces, sustainable drainage, allotments, foot/cycle-paths. Approach to maintaining/ enhancing biodiversity.
- Renewable energy approaches/methods.
- Demonstrate the approach to the moving and parked vehicle. The general assumption will be that roads, vehicular access and parking will not dominate the character of the development.

2.5.3
The notation shown on the previous page could be useful in conveying the design concept on a map/plan, without drawing a detailed layout. It is important, though, that the symbols relate to the scale of the plan.

The Design Process at a glance

Context Appraisal

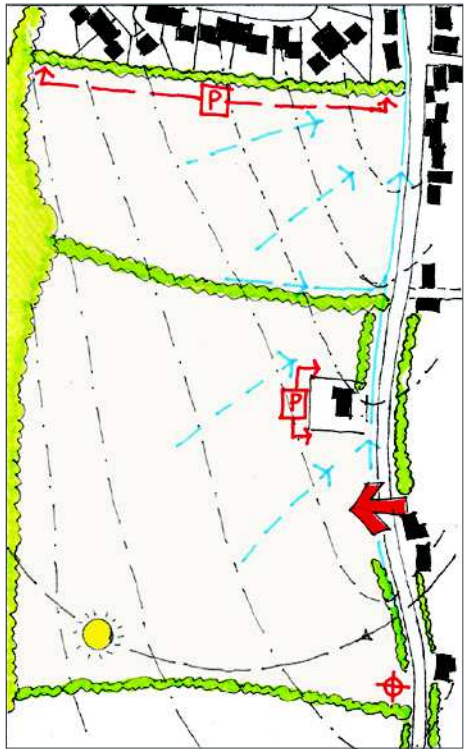
See Section 2.3



- mportant wooded kyline
- andmark
- us stop
- uality street scene
- Local school
- Pedestrian desire line
- Intrusive junction
- Initial view of village

Site Appraisal

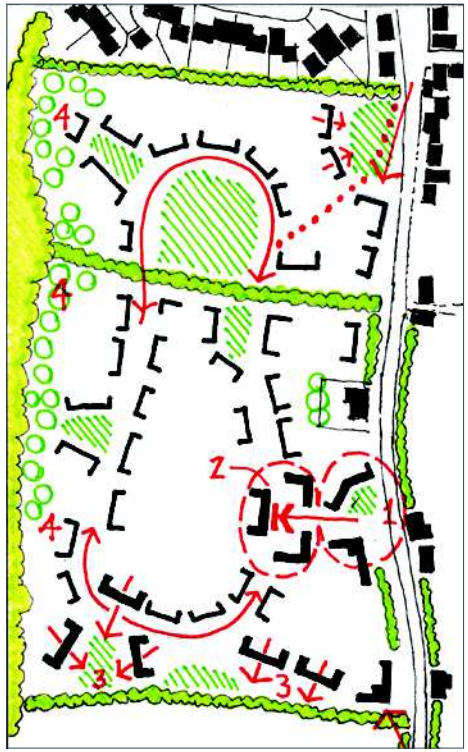
See Section 2.4



- Boundary privacy issues
- Optimum site entry point
- Reinforce village 'entry'
- Run-off direction
- Existing drainage stream
- Sun's path

Design Concept

See Section 2.5



- ivotal corner design
- ey frontage design
- Street frontage
- View terminated
- Consider view
- Bend to absorb gradient
- Greenspace/swale drainage
- Reinforce existing trees
- Key entrance design
- Key group: square
- Outward looking edge
- Rooflines below ridgeline

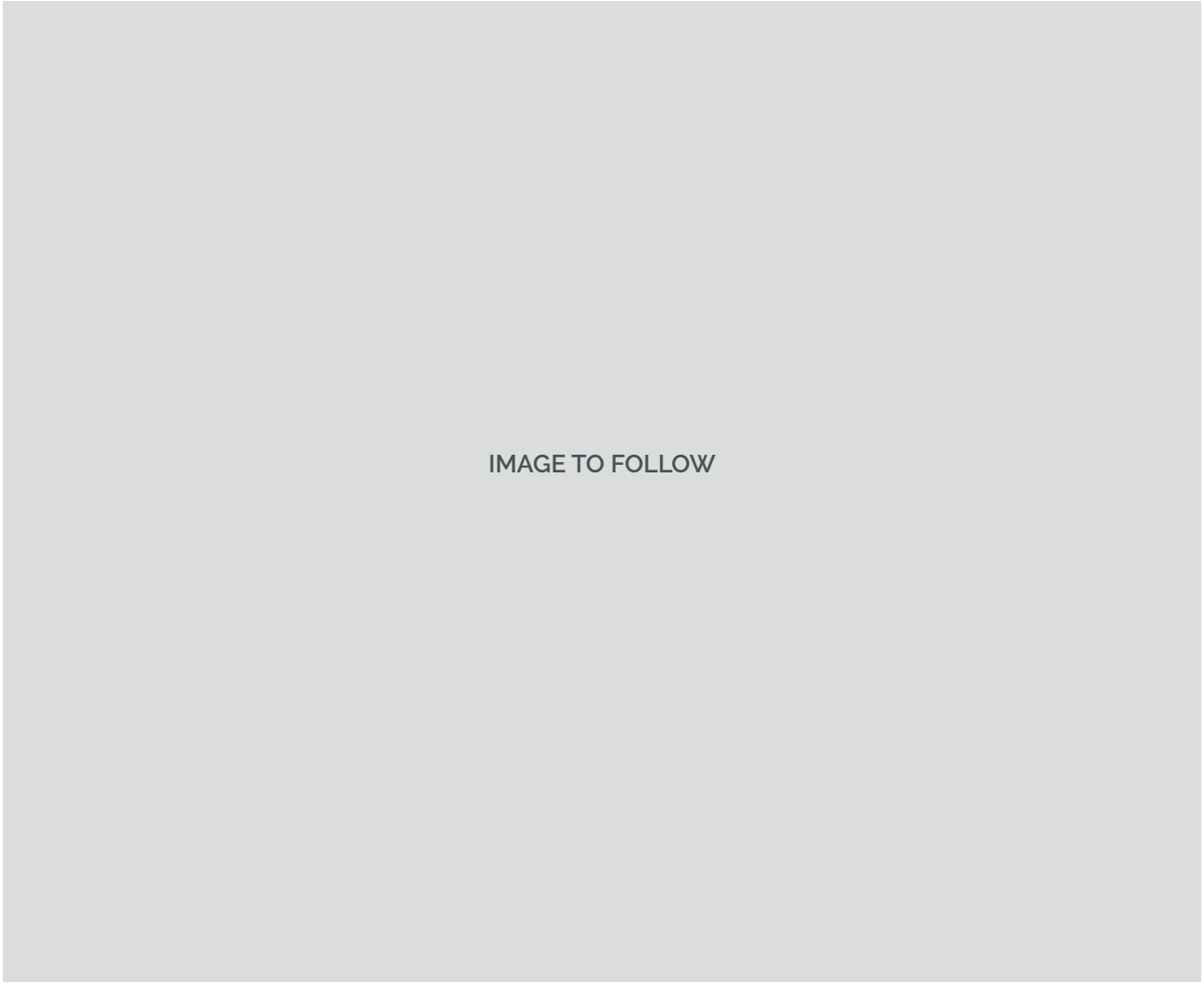
2.6 Consultation

2.6.1
It will generally be expected that the above stages in the design process form the basis for consultation with neighbours, the local community and planning officers. Other stakeholders, where relevant, might also be involved. This early stage of consultation, before the detailed design work on the full application progresses too far, can save time in later revisions and conveys the message that the scheme can be adapted to address local views and issues.

2.6.2
The format of the consultations should be appropriate to the size of the development proposals, from informal conversations to meetings, exhibitions and workshops. It is recommended that the designers/developers return to the consultees to show how their concerns have been addressed. The process of the consultations and consequent revisions, as well as the Design Process set out in this section, will form the basis of the Design & Access Statement,see Section 6.2.

2.7 Detailed Design

Full sets of drawings will be expected, at the appropriate scales. Sections through the site and a street elevation along the main frontage are very helpful in explaining the project, as are computer generated visualisations. It is essential that on the site plan at least, all the adjacent buildings, trees and all other relevant structures are shown. Information on all building materials and finishes should be provided on the elevational drawings and details on boundary design, lighting and street and path materials and details shown, see Section 6.1.



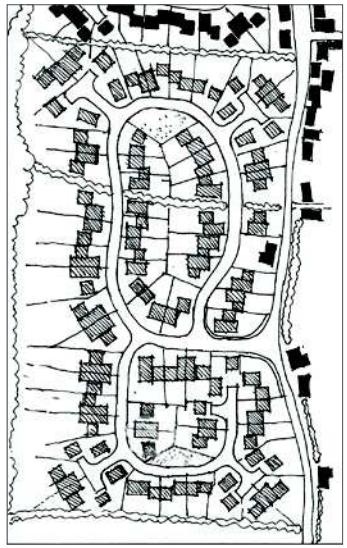
Design Scheme

This layout indicates how the design concept could be translated into a final plan.

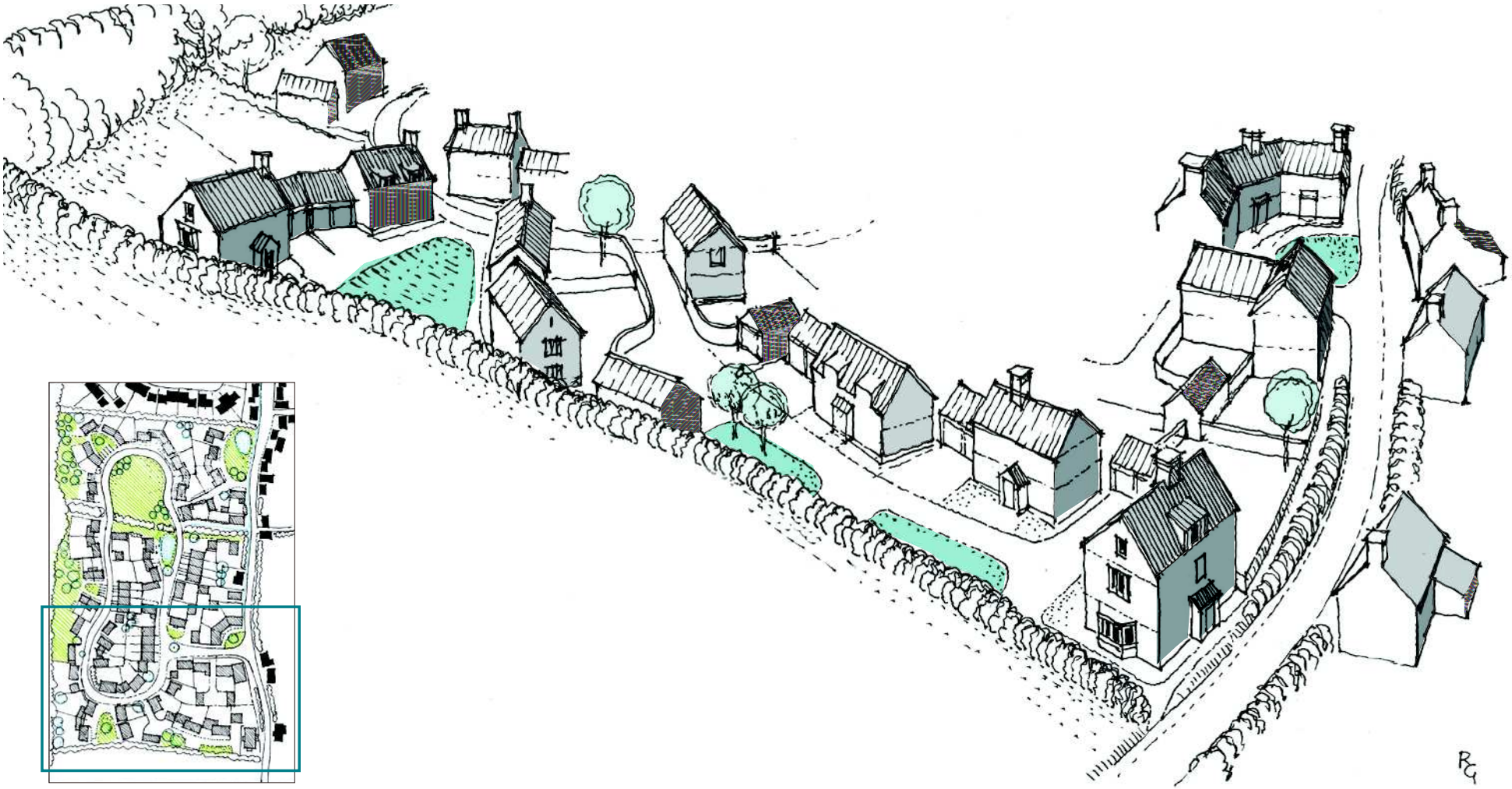
- Frontages face the road approaching the village and to the village edge.
- The substantial house on the SE corner of the site reinforces the entry to the village.
- The site entrance is defined by key building groups and appropriate sight lines.
- An informal square creates a 'calmed' road junction and focal point.
- Privacy for existing house on N boundary maintained by proposed houses/gardens.
- The variety of house types would provide wide choice and streetscape interest.
- Wide front cottage types reflect local forms and align well along contours.
- They are also grouped to create curving frontages and frame greens.
- Greens and tree planting aid natural drainage and facilitate wide uphill bends.
- Existing hedgerow on site can be maintained via paths and greens alongside.

The type of layout below would be *unlikely* to be approved.

- Inward looking scheme, with back gardens and fences onto road & village edge.
- Awkward plots and 'spaces left over' due to unrelated curvilinear road layout.
- Absence of hierarchy and placeshaping resulting in uniform & standard appearance.
- Road layout lacks permeability in many places.
- Little evidence of sustainable drainage measures.



Design and layout of development frontage to address both the countryside edge and the entry to a settlement:



3.1	Introduction	27
3.2	Learning from the Locality	28
3.3	Character Areas	38

3.0 CONTEXT & DISTINCTIVENESS

3.1 Introduction

Planning policy at national and local level echoes community concerns that new development should have regard to and reflect the positive aspects of the character of the area; that new development should avoid the form and appearance of being 'anonymous' or 'anywhere'. Often the response to this challenge has purely been to apply a veneer of local-looking materials to otherwise standard houses and layouts. This is not appropriate.

This section sets out to identify the key characteristics of the area, thus suggesting cues for designers and developers to respond to in their schemes. In particular, it should prove a useful springboard to the preparation of Context and Site Appraisals, a key part of a Design and Access Statement. It will also prove a useful starting point for design within Conservation Areas and involving Heritage Assets and the preparation on Heritage Statements, see Section 6.4.

Where they exist, Conservation Area Character Statements and Village Design Statements should be consulted, for more detailed local information and the value placed on local assets. Historic maps are an invaluable source of information on the nature and layout of previous land uses, significant boundaries and local place names.

Taunton Garden Town information

For proposed developments within the Taunton Garden Town area, 3.2.0 and 3.2.7 in this section will be appropriate. Additionally, sections 2.3 and 2.4 will be useful guides to the Appraisal of the Context and Site for any proposals. The document *Taunton; the Vision for our Garden Town* section 1, 'Understanding Our Roots' (pp 8-11) contains other specific information on the context and distinctiveness of the town.

What is likely to contribute to the distinctiveness of a development?

The appraisals in 2.3 and 2.4 should reveal (for example):-

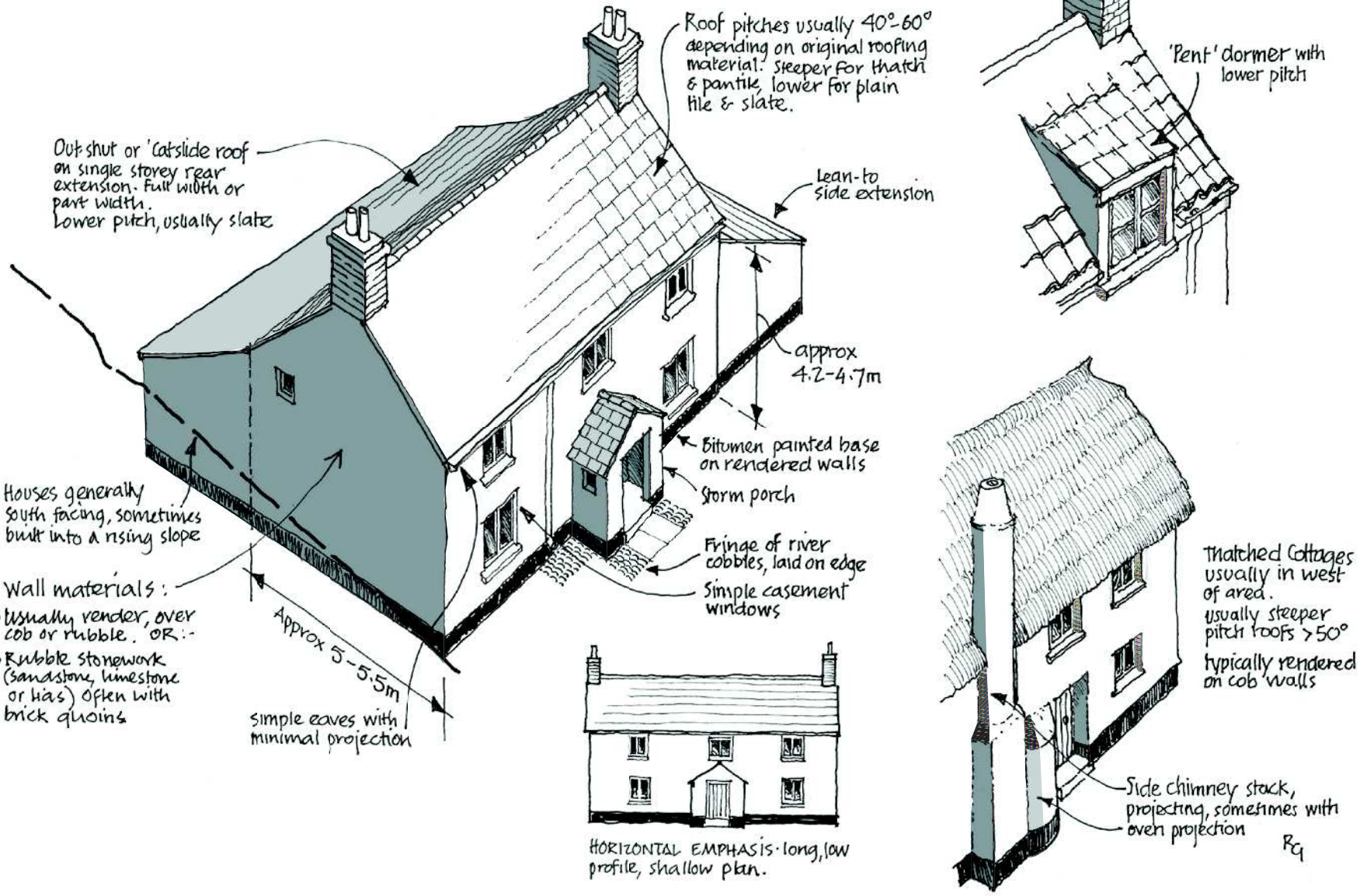
- The nature, scale, layout and grain of the setting or context of the site.
- Critical skylines, rooflines, views (long and short) and landmarks.
- The 'lie of the land': topography; areas of exposure and shelter.
- Existing drainage form and capacity.
- Landscape and heritage assets.
- The palette of vernacular building materials and colours (normally in non-urban settings)
- Aspects of traditional built form which respond to local circumstances.
- Critical boundaries (privacy, high visibility, distinctive materials, etc.)
- 'Desire lines' and other important pedestrian routes.

The quality of the planning and design response to these aspects will contribute to the success of the proposals.

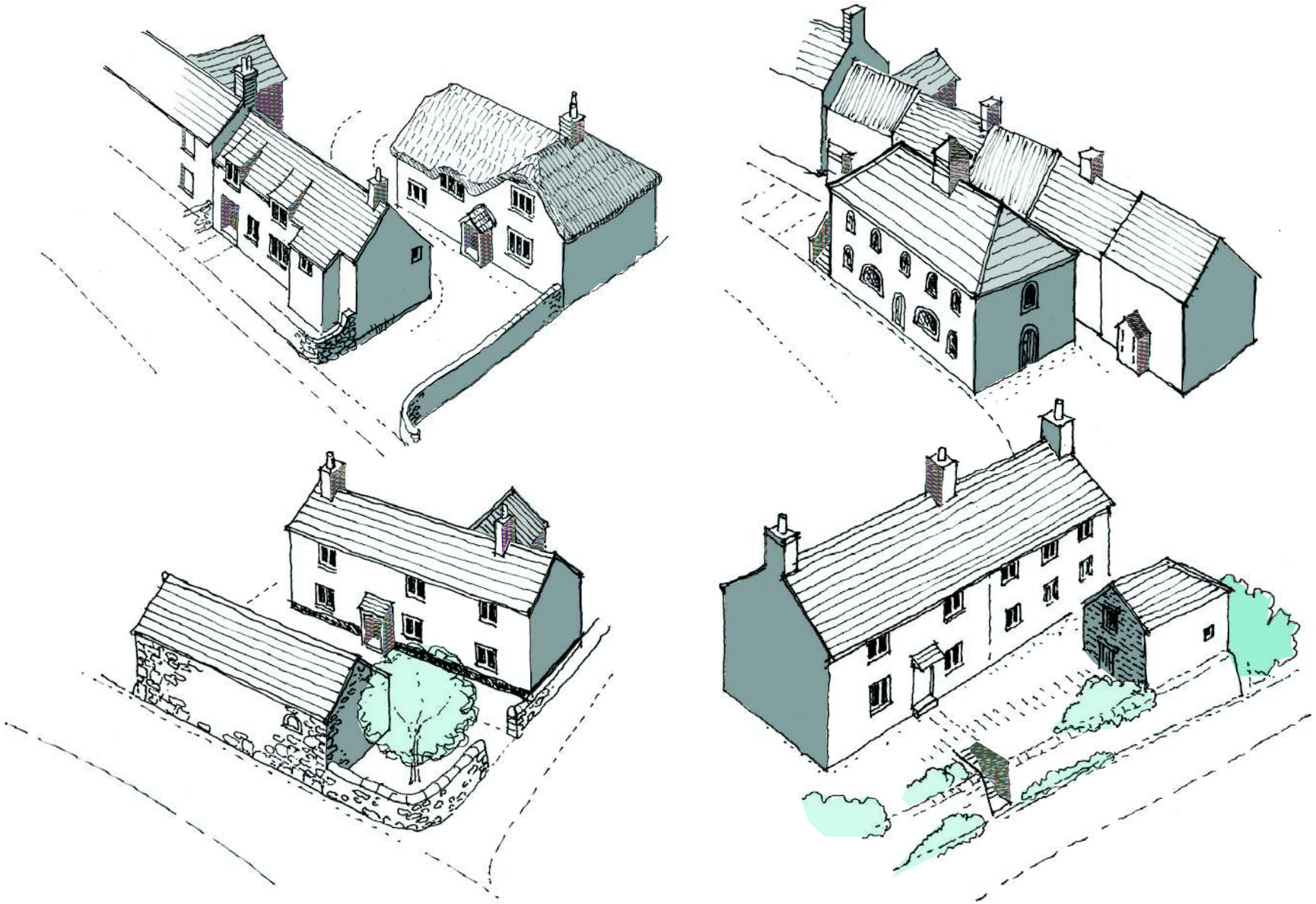
3.2 Learning from the Locality

Section 3.2 Learning from the Locality illustrates some aspects of design and placemaking in the district, which could stimulate thinking on distinctive design solutions.

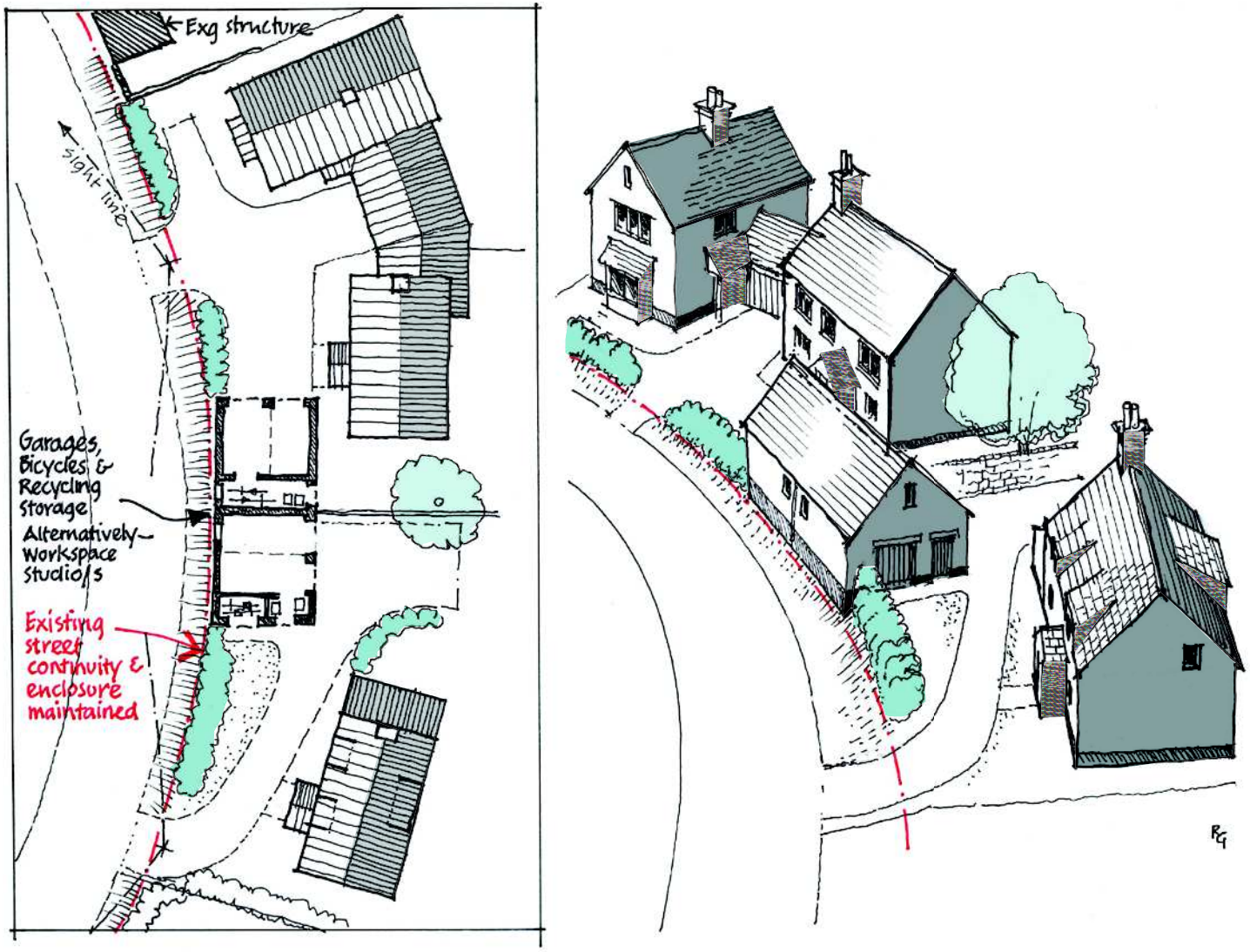
Cottage types



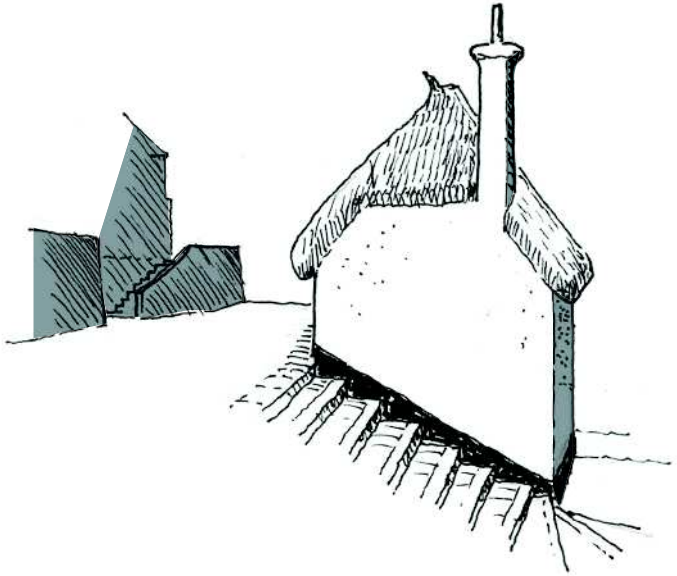
Characteristic 'Tandem' building layouts

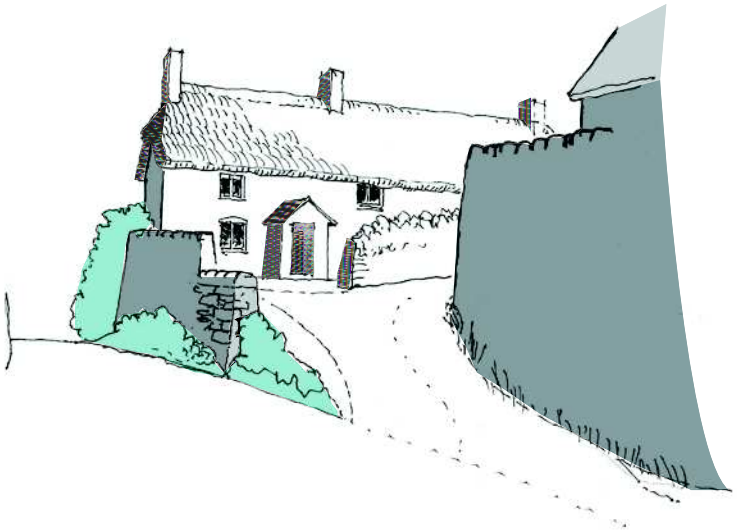


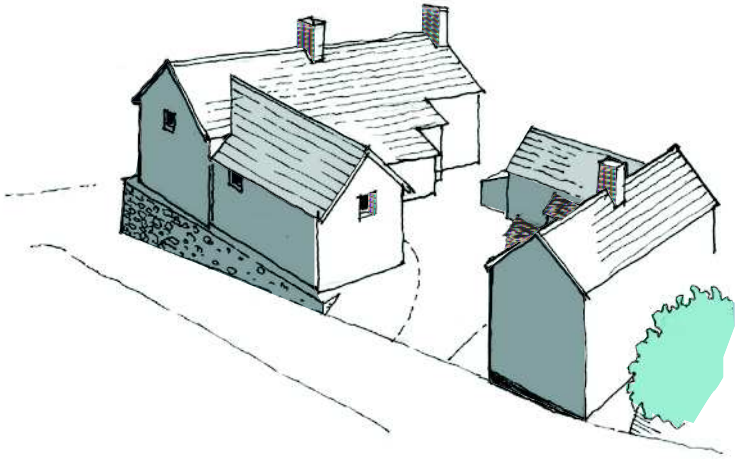
Indicative sketch showing tandem arrangement to establish street continuity



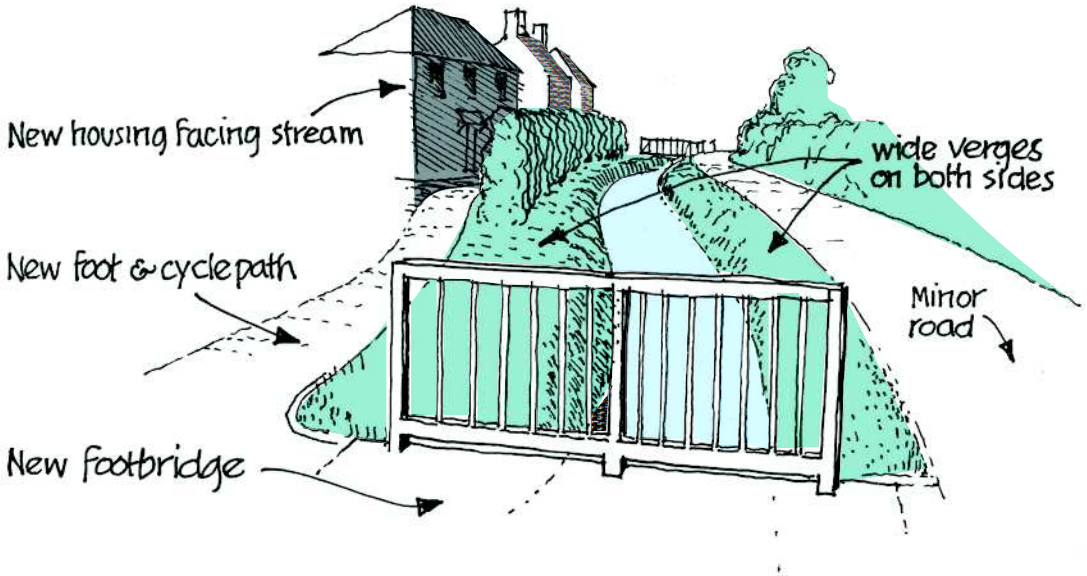
Traditional solutions to building on sloping sites

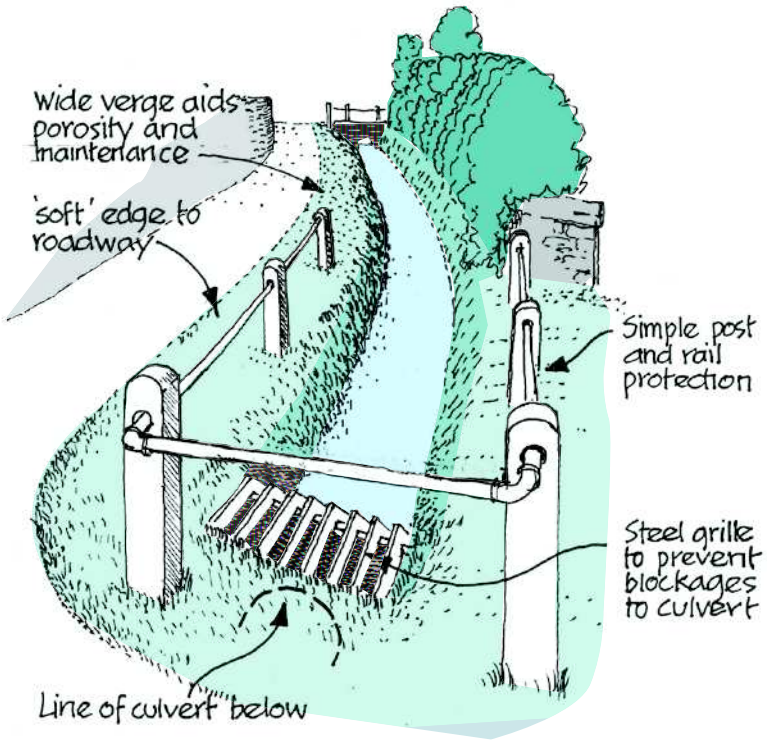


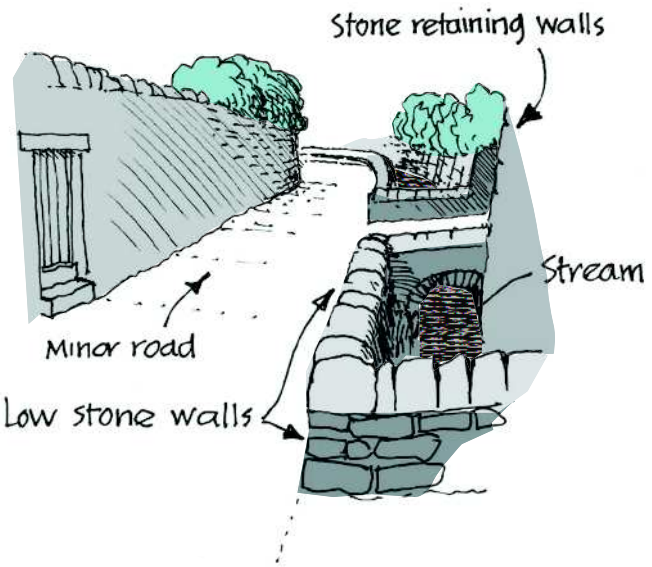


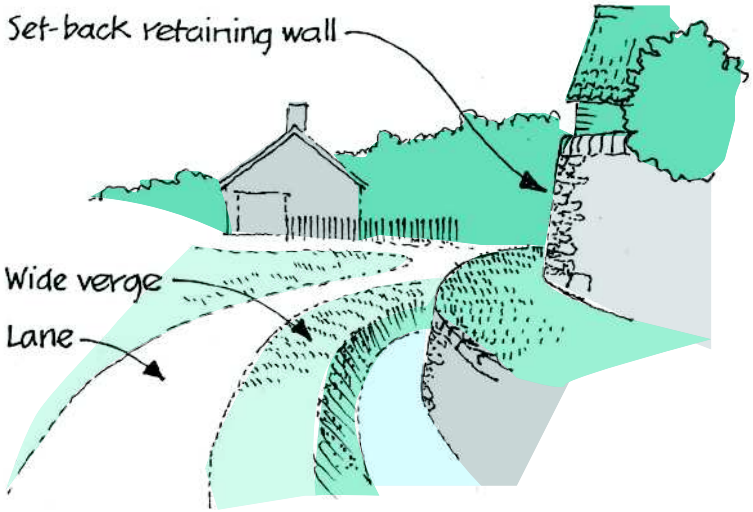


Examples of roadside drainage in settlements

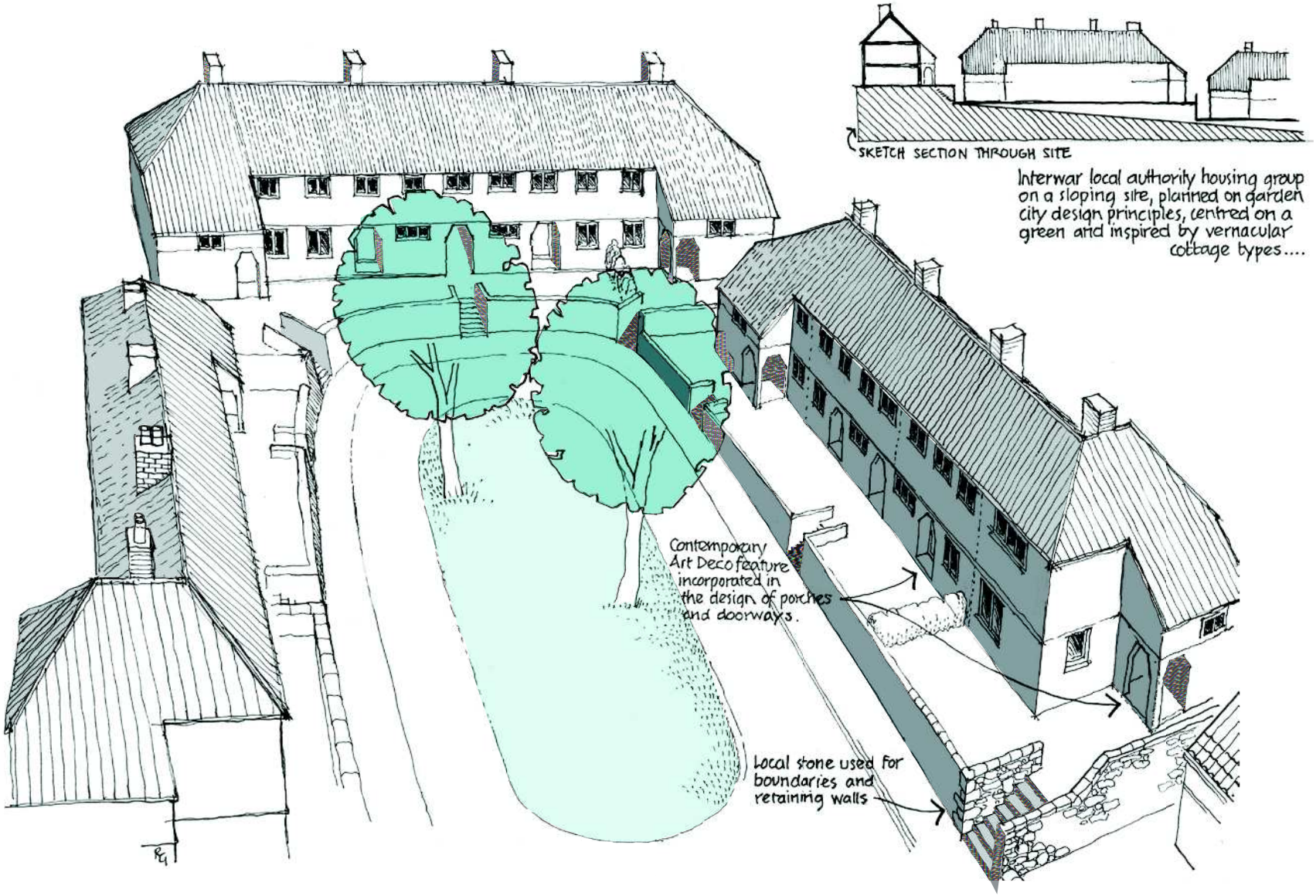






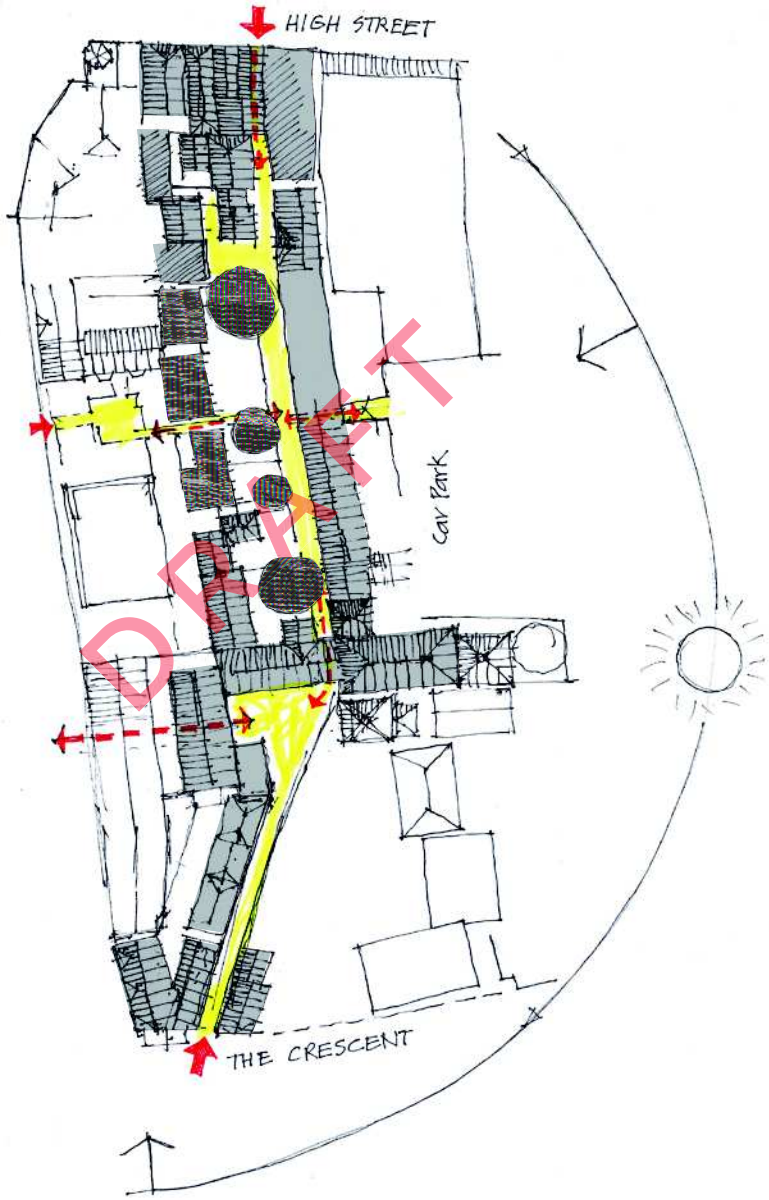


Housing group on sloping site: Quarry Close, Minehead

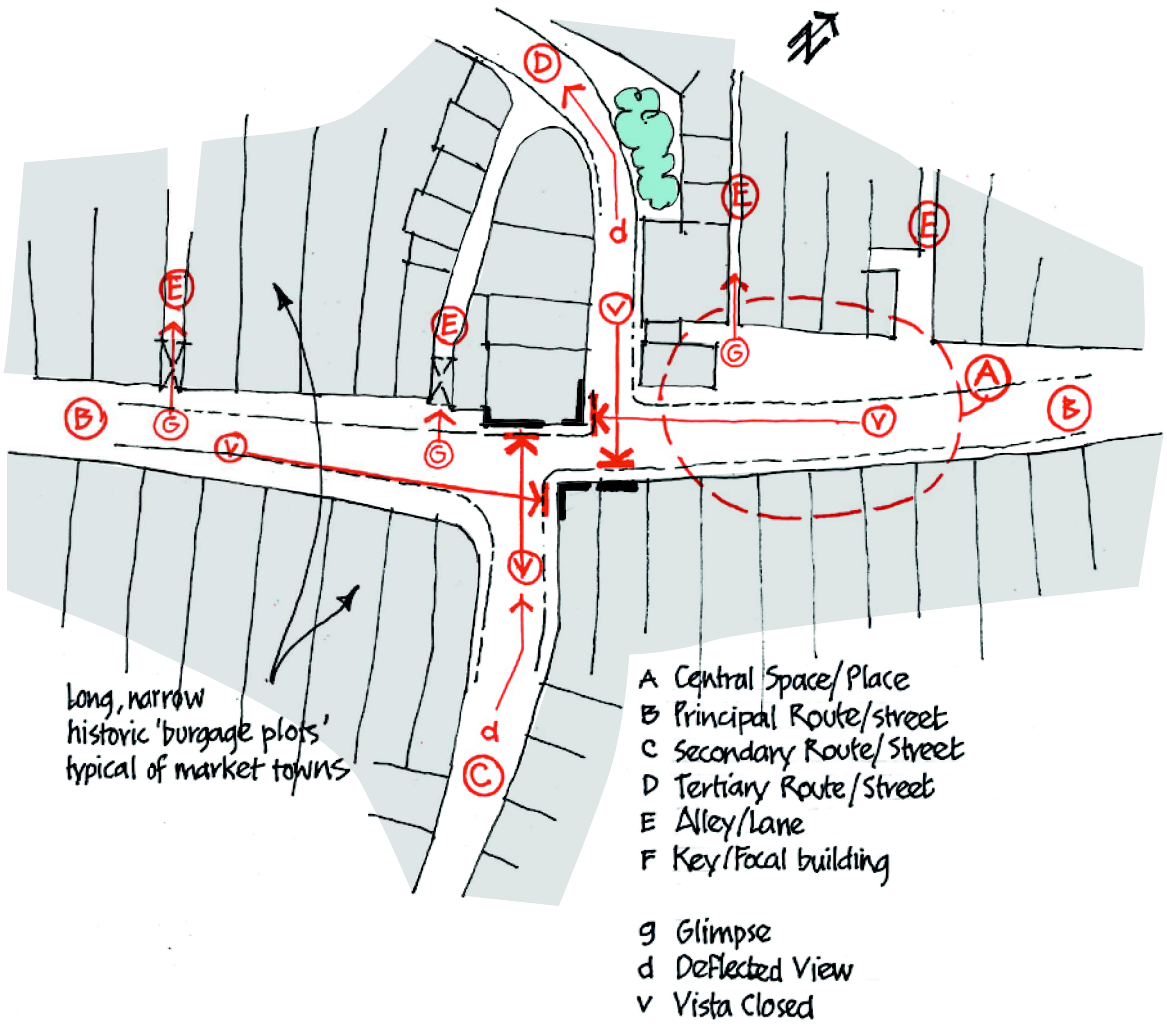


An intimate mixed use and residential pedestrian place: Bath Place, Taunton

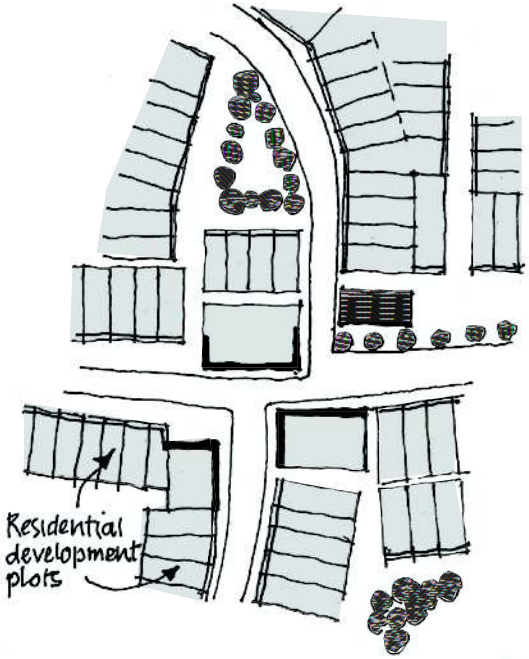
This attractive place thrives as it is built around a route and has cross connectivity. The space opens up and closes down as you move through; it is domestically scaled yet has public buildings, individual houses and independent shops. There is a high proportion of active frontages, and well defined public, semi public and private space. The handful of mature trees provide a dappled canopy, changing with the seasons.



A distinctive place and local hub: High Street, Wellington



Placemaking:
How traditional townscapes could influence new neighbourhood centres



Local paving materials

The traditional paving materials of the area contribute as much to its local distinctiveness as the building materials which characterise its vernacular architecture. They derive from the local geology, supplemented by more durable stone products from adjacent areas. Consequently, due to their relative scarcity (due to damage and replacement) and their relationship to their locality, they should be considered as Heritage Assets. Where construction work is undertaken in the proximity of areas of traditional paving materials, these should be given appropriate protection.

The main materials are:-

Cobbles; usually dark brown small river stones, or grey blue beach cobbles, mainly found in the north and west of the district. These are laid on edge, tightly packed. In some cases they were laid in attractive patterns, highlighted by lighter coloured cobbles. They are usually found as short areas of pavement, margins in front of buildings and in churchyards. Due to their relatively uncomfortable texture as a footway surface, narrow pathways of clay pavers have often been inserted for ease of accessibility.

Rough-hewn cobbles of chert (local flinty material) can be seen in limited areas in the south of the district.

Lias; used as flagstones, kerbing and crossovers (as narrow setts). Usually found in the centre and east of the district. Being a relatively soft rock, it is vulnerable to wear and fracture, although harder, denser variants, sometimes veined, are particularly attractive.

Pennant; this carboniferous sandstone from north Somerset, the Bristol area and south Wales, is an ideal paving material, being durable, non-slip and can be cut to fine tolerances. It can be seen in places throughout the district, used as flagstones, crossovers, kerbs and steps.

Clay Pavers; in a characteristic incised geometric pattern. Usually buff colours, although variants in red and blue can also be seen. Traditionally they were mainly used for footpaths and margins in front of shops.


Buff-coloured clay paver


Pennant flagstone paving


Lias flagstones


Two-coloured cobbles laid in pattern with lias kerb


Small cobbles with paver access

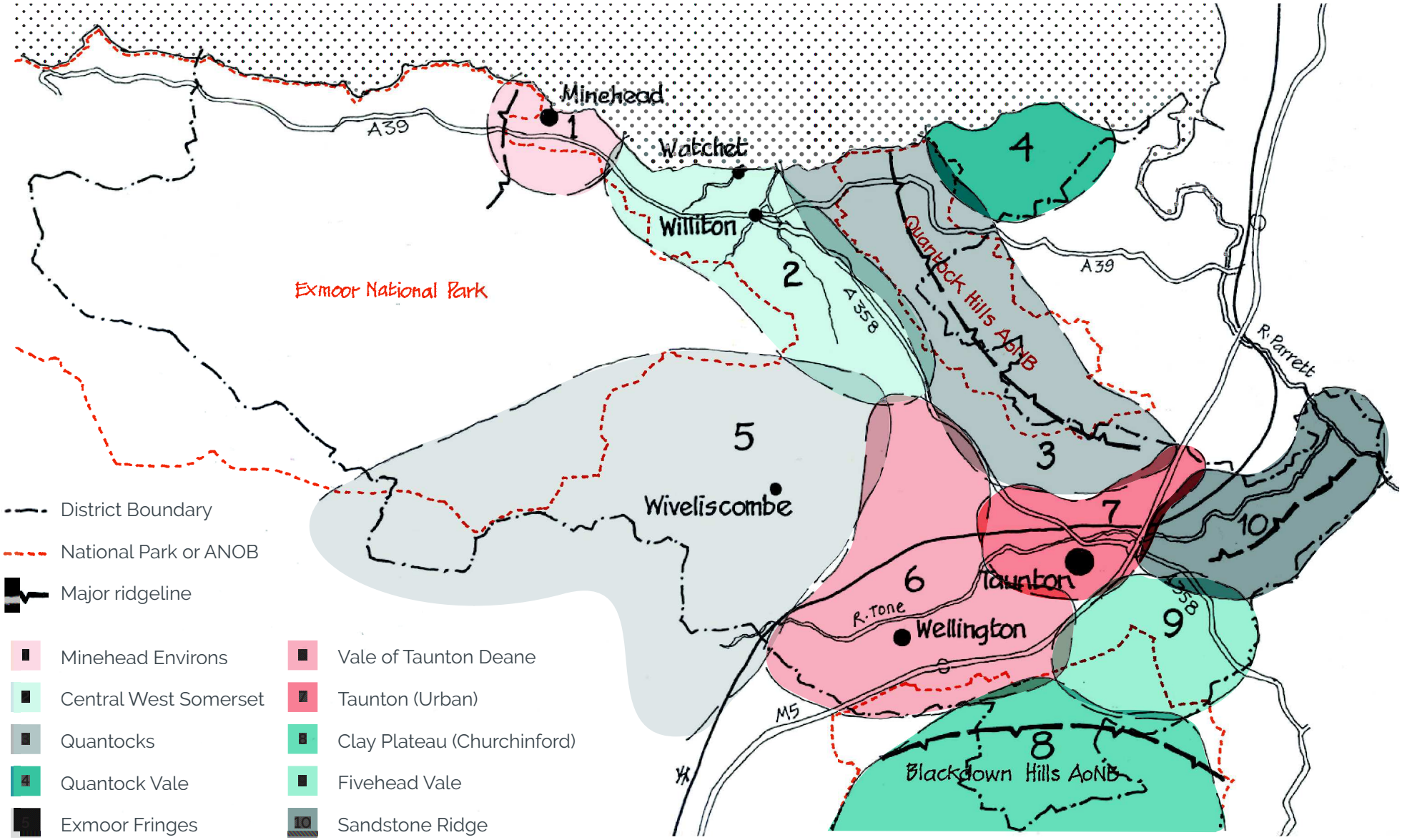

Clay paver pathway

3.3 Character Areas

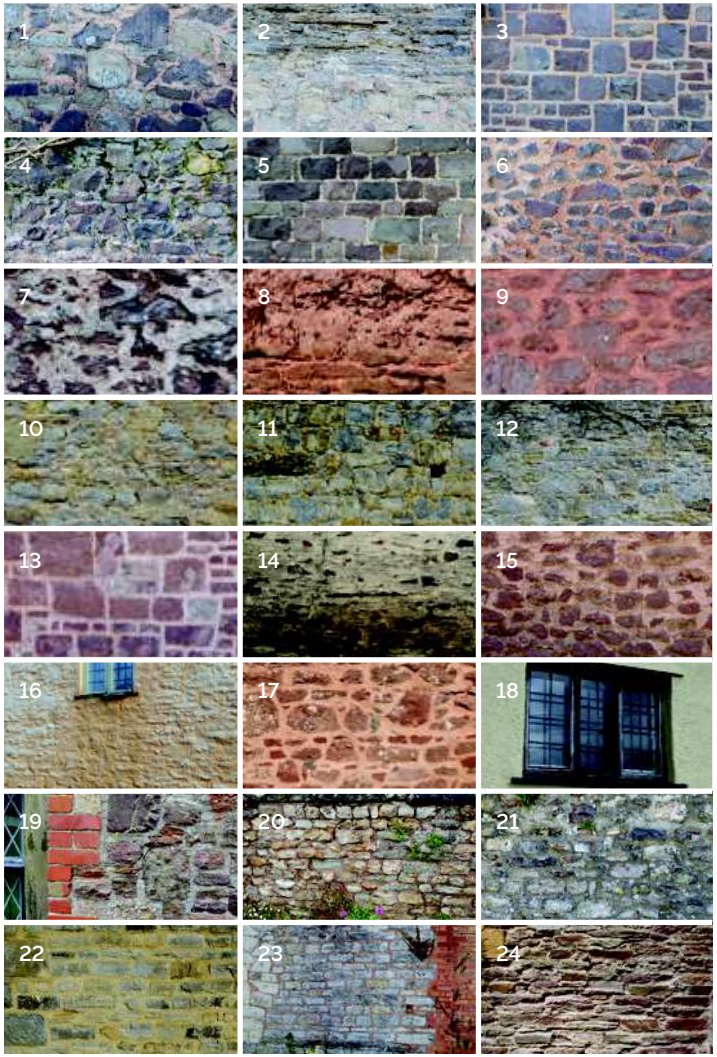
The district, being quite extensive, is composed of a rich variety of geology and landscape types. It ranges in elevation from the levels and moors to the high ridges of the Quantocks, Blackdowns and Exmoor. Its settlement patterns range from the dispersed farm groups to sizeable towns, whilst always being of a relatively modest scale, rooted in the landscape. It is natural therefore to regard the district character as containing a number of character areas, rather than being homogenous.

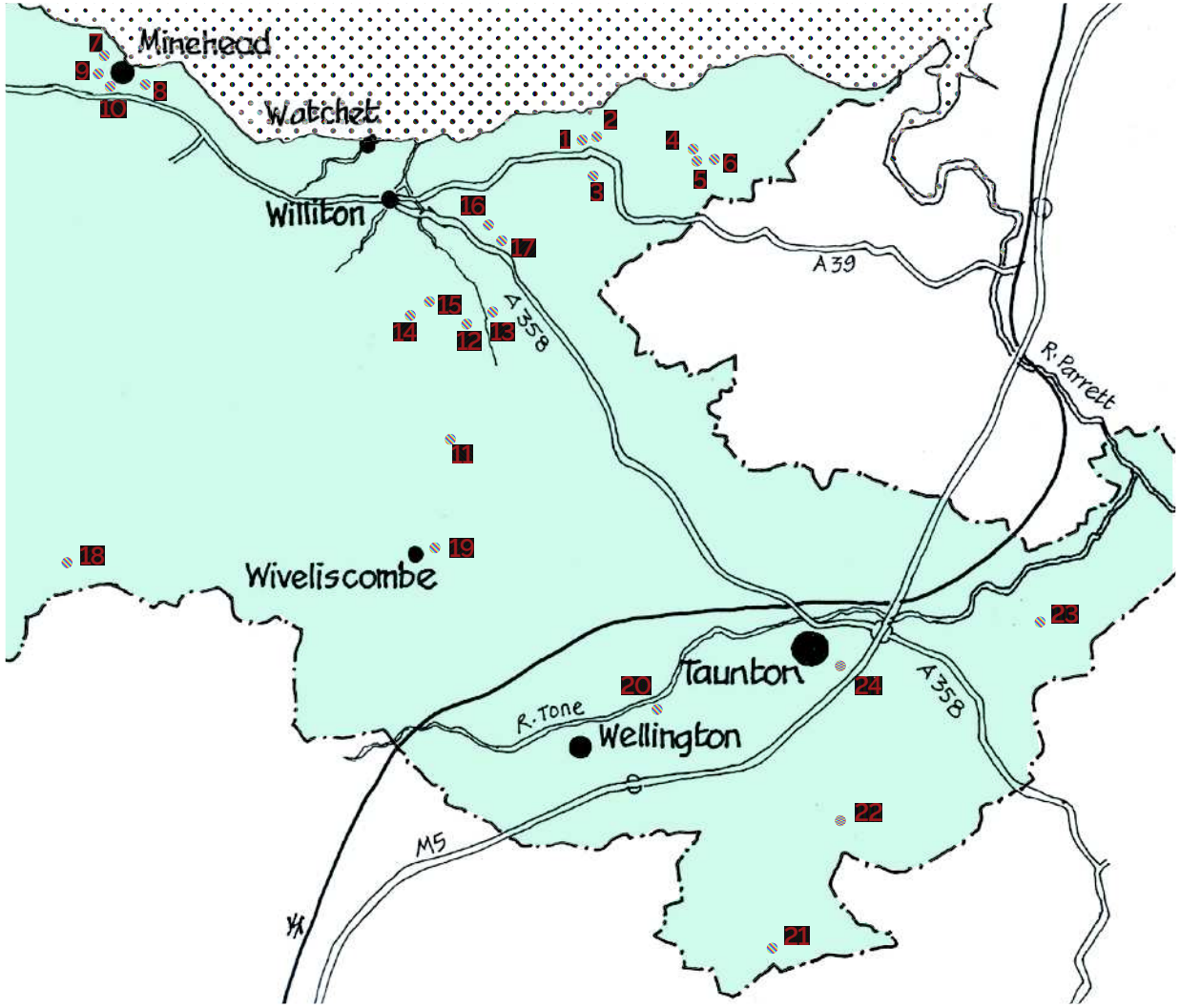
The map on the following page shows these character areas. This section highlights the character of each area under the headings; Landscape, topology & geology; Settlement types & form, Built form, Materials, Views, Issues. The response from designers and developers should be sensitive to the scale, form and appearance of the character area in which their development proposals are situated. The following descriptions should provide a useful introduction to any character appraisals. You should also consult any conservation area appraisals or village design statements (link to website) which may be available for the area within which your site is located.

Map of Character Areas



Vernacular building materials





3.3.1 Minehead Environs

1 See Map on page 39

Landscape, topology & geology

The character area is a combination of upland, lowland and coastal landscapes types. The area to the west and south-west of the town falling within the National Park boundary forms part of a larger wooded coastal landscape that offers a striking and picturesque backdrop to Minehead town **(Fig. 1)**, its harbour and promenade. To the west and south-west of Minehead open field agriculture is practised in Porlock and the Dunster Vales, and along the coastal fringe to the west.

To the west of the town and forming the underlying geology to Higher Town, the geology of Devonian Old Red Sandstone (Hangman Sandstone formation) is a relatively hard rock, and has eroded to a lesser extent than the soft rocks which surround it, leaving at least parts of this character area at relatively high altitude.

Settlement types & form

Minehead is the main town and comprises three settlements; High Town, Quay Town and Lower Town (including Alcombe). This has been encased within the seaside resort development which began in the late 19th century. The tight attractive townscape of High Town is a stark contrast to the (mostly) 18th and 19th planned streets of the Lower Town.

Built form

The older settlements of High Town and Quay Town have some excellent examples of the local vernacular; one and half and two storey cottage scale stone houses (some painted, some unpainted) with combed wheat thatch roofs **(Fig. 2)**. The linear development of both constrained and defined by topography such as the narrow building line along the quay with its backdrop of tree lined cliffs is particularly notable. Otherwise, the quality and scale of Arts and Crafts style villas of late Victorian/Edwardian Minehead **(Fig. 3)** are a significant feature, with an interesting use of Delabole slate roofs and slate hanging and render.

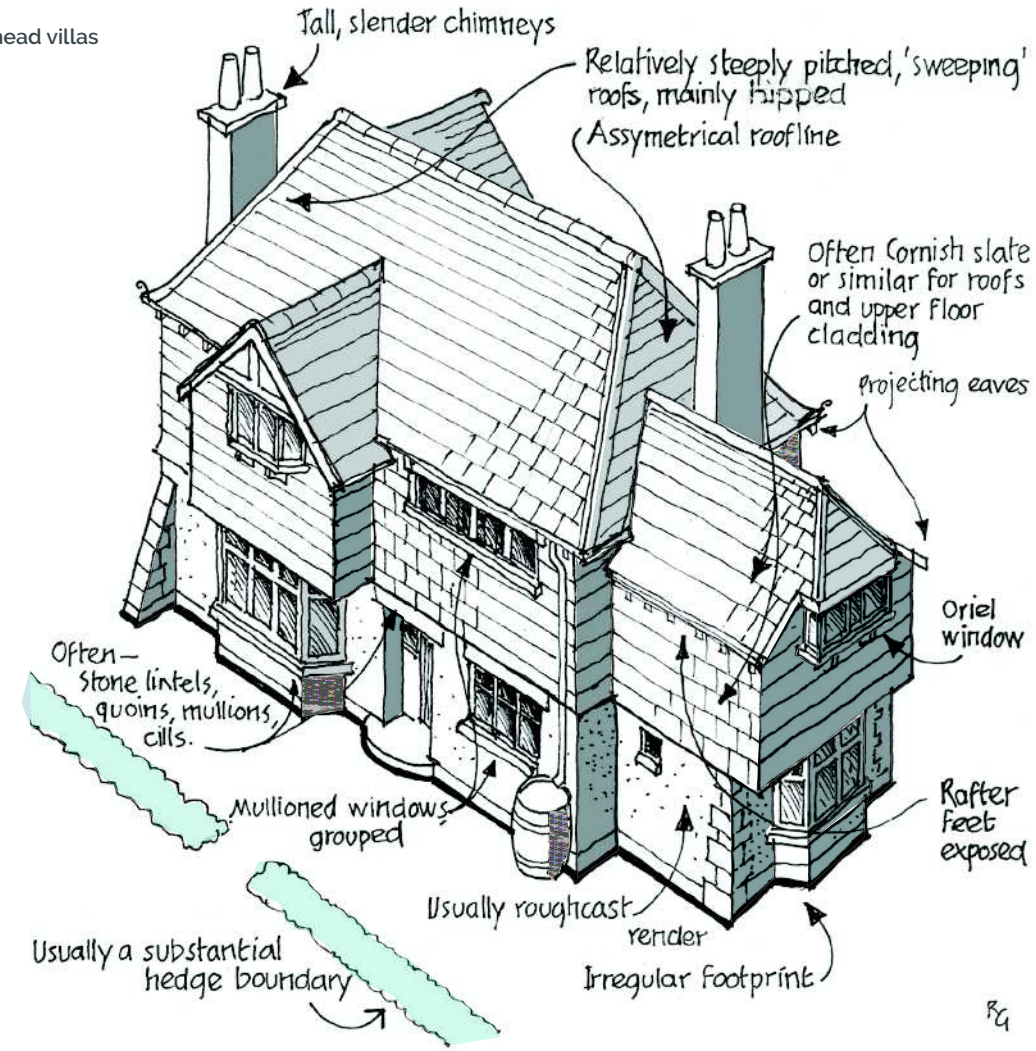
Fig. 1: View from Higher Town looking south towards the Exmoor National Park

Fig. 2: Cob and thatch, Higher Town, Minehead

3.3.1 Minehead Environs (continued)

1 See Map on page 39

Fig. 3:
Minehead villas



Materials

Good examples of the red sandstone walling particularly to boundary walling throughout, often dressed and squared rather than rubble stone (although the latter is also seen). Good survival of groups of thatched houses, some clay tile but mostly natural Welsh slate **(Fig. 4)**. Some tile and slate hanging reflective of the Arts and Crafts period which permeates through much of the suburban development **(Fig. 5)**.

Fig. 4: Render and natural slate

Fig. 5: Tile Hanging; Delabole Slate, Higher Town

3.3.1 Minehead Environs (continued)

1 See Map on page 39

Views

Views to the higher ground surrounding Minehead are memorable and attractive with built form often secondary to small (well-appointed gardens) and larger (treed slopes and backdrops) landscaped settings to High Town and long views to the semi-open ridges of the edge of the Exmoor National Park to the south and south-west of the town. There are also good town-defining views from the higher slopes of the fringes of the town.

Issues

- A challenging and sensitive topography which makes urban extension difficult
- Poor transport links to the principal routes through the district
- Most of the local vernacular materials are in short supply or no longer available
- The character and scale of each of the defined areas will be a determining factor in successful design interventions
- The visual impact of development; scale, form, skyline, colours and textures of materials against the backdrop of the Exmoor National Park is critical
- Boundary treatments in the street scene will be critical throughout

3.3.2 Central West Somerset

2 See Map on page 39

Landscape, topography & geology

This part of the district is characterized by rolling relatively low rise hills, rarely over 100m AD divided by numerous streams and rivers in generally narrow but not steep-sided valleys. The hills of Exmoor (to the south and west including the notable conical hill of Dunster Castle) and the Quantocks (to the east) visually enclose the area with the relatively low lying landscape to the sea to the north providing an openness of view not seen elsewhere. To the south towards the boundary with Exmoor National Park, there is a still readable medieval landscape with small fields and frequent narrow lanes and tracks. The geology is Jurassic, Blue lias rock overlaying Mercia Mudstones and Permian sandstones towards Exmoor Hills. A vale of Red Marl is drained by the Donniford Stream (the dominant catchment in the area).

Settlement types & form

Williton, **(Fig. 1)** the local centre, has close associations with its coastal neighbour, Watchet, a settlement whose fortunes have risen and fallen on its ability to trade from its harbour. The further village settlements of Bicknoller, Stogumber **(Fig. 2)** and Monksilver are historic nucleated settlements with strongly defined fine-grained townscape, often integrating streams into the streetscape. **(Fig. 3)**

Fig. 1: Williton within its setting

Fig. 2: Stogumber within its Quantocks setting

Fig. 3: Water management

3.3.2 Central West Somerset (continued)

2 See Map on page 39

Built form

Small scale traditional cottage scale residential buildings, in small plots often fronting streets. Farm buildings and groups are also small and sometimes found in linear arrangements incorporating a long house (this has often been much altered).

Materials

The locally distinctive stone, a small component sometimes shale-like red/orange stone, sometimes rendered or part-rendered with a lime mortar combined with combed wheat thatch, natural slates and pantiles. Some evidence of cob (earthy red colours where exposed) **(Fig. 4)**.

Views

To the south of the character area views are often foreshortened or closed due to townscape or landscape (woodland, tree and hedge boundaries) and constant changes in topography. The views towards the lower lying coastal plain north of Washford and Williton are longer with a stronger sense of openness. This is particularly the case when travelling along the A39 and transitioning towards the Minehead environs character area.

Issues

- Area is highly sensitive to flood risk and in places, coastal inundation.
- Water forms an important feature of most settlements and future development should pay careful attention to the sustainable and sensible management of changes to settlements and/or sites.
- Small scale characteristic urban centres such as Williton and Watchet should form the design framework for proposed development (this is particularly relevant for infill schemes)
- Any new development is likely to require a sensitively considered countryside edge subject to context and site appraisal
- The imaginative and sustainable design and management of flood risk is likely to be a significant aspect of the design of new development

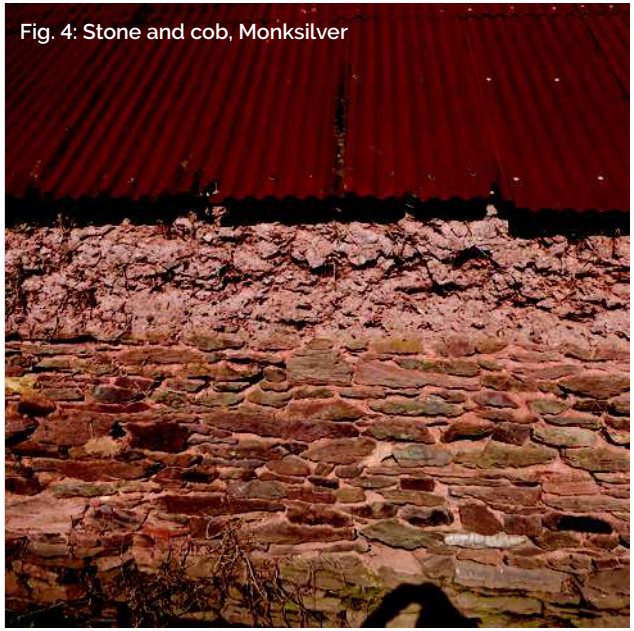


Fig. 4: Stone and cob, Monksilver

3.3.3 The Quantocks

3 See Map on page 39

Landscape, topography and geology

The Quantocks rise to a smooth rounded summit (over 300m AD), incised by deep combes. They curve inland from the Bristol Channel, and have a dramatic ridge land form with varied land cover. Much of the character area lies within the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This is open common land; a visually dominant feature for much of the district **(Fig. 1)**. The east side is characterized by deep wooded combes whilst the west is a steep scarp from the Upland plateau. The slopes are often a mix of ancient oak and holly trees with southern slopes more commercial plantation; larch, pine, spruce, and fir.

Liassic Limestone from outcrops towards the coast has been used as a local building stone. In addition, numerous remnants of former lime kilns confirm the significance and value of the complex geological pattern. Lower Old Red Sandstone appears as pockets of red sandstone throughout the character area.

Settlement types & form

The settlements are based along the spring-lines in order to utilize both the open upland and surrounding, more sheltered lowland margins.

This is an area notable for larger manor houses and mansions (Nettlecombe Court, Hestercombe, Crowcombe Court) dating from the medieval period. These are particularly characteristic of this area, especially its western edge, and including a high proportion developed from medieval deer parks.

Predominant Mixed patterns of settlement, with nucleated villages (for example Bicknoller) concentrated on western scarp edge and intermixed with high density of dispersed hamlets and isolated farmsteads, indicative of reorganisation of settlement in 8th-11th centuries, largely pre-14th century assarting from woodland and also of post-14th century settlement linked to enclosure.

Built form

A good survival of pre-1750 houses **(Fig. 2)** and farmstead buildings, mostly combination barns, concentrated on home farms of gentry estates. Many farmsteads were rebuilt in the mid/late 19th century: regular courtyard plans, with buildings including combination barns to 3 or 4 sides of yard, are common to this part of the district.

Fig. 1: Quantocks backdrop, Bicknoller

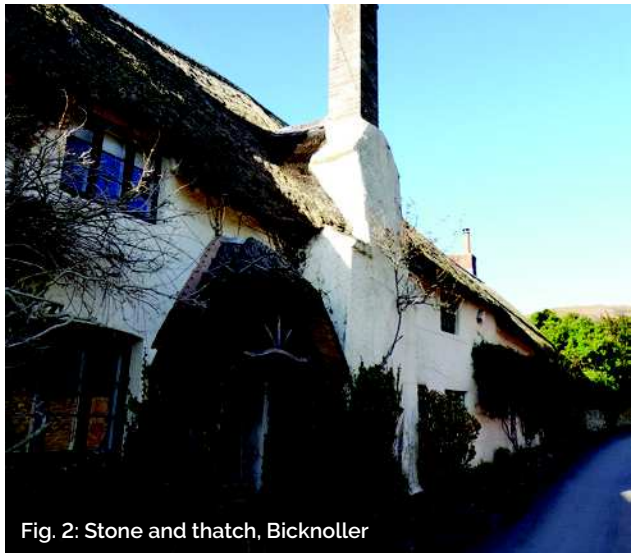


Fig. 2: Stone and thatch, Bicknoller

3.3.3 The Quantocks (continued)

3 See Map on page 39

Materials

Red sandstone is the dominant building material: Devonian Hangman Sandstone from the hills to the north; Devonian Ilfracombe Slates (with thin limestones) and Morte Slates to south; Red Triassic sandstones to south and east. Liassic limestone (a kind of shale type stone) towards the coast. The stone is generally of a more grey to purple hue **(Fig. 4)** rather than the stronger reds seen to the Central West Somerset. Roofs are a combination of thatch (combed wheat), natural slate and clay tiles (with some pantile).

Views

There are excellent panoramic views (which have historically influenced Romantic poets and artists) from the ridge and its upper plateau. The views to the lower slopes are more contained by landscape features and enclosure to roadsides (hedges and trees). However, views to settlements and small groups of buildings are important with the backdrop often described by wooded combe or scarp sides.

Issues

- New buildings can be prominent on open hillsides with excessive glazing and large-scale roofs being imappropriate interventions in an otherwise ancient and highly sensitive landscape.
- The specification of materials needs very careful consideration in terms of their potential impact when seen against a backdrop of the Quantock hills.
- Materials where possible should be natural (not artificial or artificially distressed) so that their weathering properties enable them to blend into their surroundings

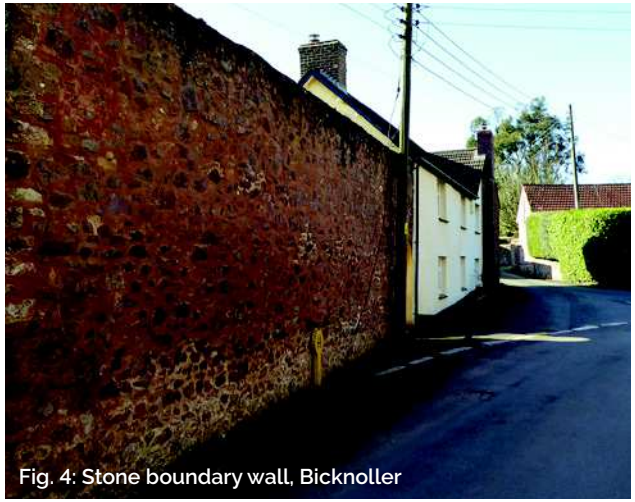


Fig. 4: Stone boundary wall, Bicknoller

3.3.4 Quantock Vale

4 See Map on page 39

Landscape, topography & geology

This area comprises a more flowing lowland landscape. The Quantock ridge is a dominant feature to the west. The coastal cliffs are internationally important for their geology, used as a geological standard for Jurassic, Blue Lias. To the east side of the ridge, numerous streams drain off the Quantock dip slopes and flow into the River Parrett. In certain areas (Stogursey for example) lias stone sits close to the surface.

Settlement types & forms

There is a mixed pattern of settlement, with nucleated villages (for example Stogursey) (Fig. 1) intermixed with a high density of dispersal of hamlets and isolated farmsteads, indicative of pre-11th century settlement and also of post-14th century settlement linked to enclosure. Many hamlets, characteristically with churches, developed from small manorial centres.

Built form

Settlements and hamlets generally comprise closely packed small cottage scale houses and former farm groups of simple form **(Fig. 2)**. In the case of Stogursey, the medieval street grid pattern is an important part of the settlement's character. There is a high concentration of pre-1750 farmstead buildings to this part of the district, these mostly comprise threshing barns (including combination buildings with cattle at one end), farmhouses and some early examples of linhays for cattle. Cider houses are typically incorporated with stabling and other functions into combination ranges.

Fig. 1: Stogursey

Fig. 2: Farm group, Kilton

3.3.4 Quantock Vale (continued)

4 See Map on page 39

Materials

A form of sandstone is seen to the far west of the valley in buildings and walls. Esleshere, the random rubble construction in lias stone because of the poor quality of this material is mostly rendered. A later adaptation to historic materials which has been adopted by the 20th expansion to villages. Traditionally, common building materials are red Triassic sandstone, with brown-grey Lias near coast **(Fig. 3)**. Thin render coats and limewash was commonly applied historically. There is some (but only limited examples of) use of cob and some thatch remains but roofs are mostly covered in slate from north Cornwall or Wales. It is notable that there are no stone dressings to windows and doors (as found further inland). The original thatch has gradually been replaced by Bridgwater tiles and Welsh slate and this is often combined with a raising of the eaves level.

Views

There are some open coastal views particularly around Kilve environs and Kilton **(Fig. 4)** although the coastline is never actually viewed due to topography. Areas inland are surprising devoid of extended views although the Quantocks to the west often provide a sense of enclosure on travelling through this part of the district.

Issues

- The exposed and expansive landscape is challenging for most modern building materials and requires careful consideration of both the open aspects of the landscape and its proximity to the sea and exposure to prevailing weather.
- The conversion of farm buildings will require sensitive and imaginative solutions to working with the building form and it probable semi-open or open setting
- Infill development in settlements needs to pay careful attention to street alignment and a generally modest scale of built form

Fig. 3: Farm Cottages, Kilton

Fig. 4: Open coastal views, Kilve environs

3.3.5 Exmoor Fringes

5 See Map on page 39

Landscape, topography & geology

This area comprises a varied landscape of larger more open fields to the north-east of Clatworthy reservoir and a more ancient landscape (small fields, hedges, small woodlands) to the south-west and east of the reservoir **(Fig. 1)**. There are some good examples of enclosure landscape; larger (beech) hedged fields and woodlands of coniferous plantations to generally hilly terrain. The younger Devonian rocks, the Pickwell Down beds and the Pilton beds to the south of Dulverton is interspersed with a Morte Slate fringe.

Settlements types & form

The compact hill town of Wiveliscombe is the main settlement in the area; otherwise, Milverton is large village with some fine examples of Georgian vernacular. Settlements (such as Clatworthy and Huish Champflower) are frequent but mostly small and loosely grained; often hamlets **(Fig. 2)** and larger farm groups (such as Higher, Middle and Lower Farm) have large farm houses and agricultural buildings. To the north, the Brendon Hills the few farmsteads are isolated, partly due to the heavily wooded hills and combes.

Built form

Predominant farm groups and plans comprise small-scale courtyard including U and especially L-plan layouts, sometimes with the farmhouse attached to the working buildings. There are also significant numbers of linear and parallel farmsteads, the latter with their working buildings set in parallel to the house with occasional attached working buildings. Open-fronted linhays are frequently found facing into cattle yards. They are concentrated in the eastern half of the area, where they form part of the major concentration of this distinctive building type in south west England. The use of circular stone piers for linhays and shelter sheds **(Fig. 3)** is a distinctive feature; later linhays and shelters typically use timber posts. Wiveliscombe is characterised by continuous street frontages of 2-4 storey buildings, radiating from an informal square.

Larger farmsteads are mostly regular U-plan but also dispersed and regular multi-yard plans, developed in some areas (such as those seen to Higher, Middle and Lower Farm and Sperry Barton). These are associated with larger fields that retain the irregular forms of ancient and piecemeal enclosure.

Fig. 1: Landscape, Clatworthy environs

Fig. 2: Farm cottages, Clatworthy

Fig. 3: Farm group, Bury

3.3.5 Exmoor Fringes (continued)

5 See Map on page 39

Materials

The predominant traditional materials are a darker brown sandstone, often more shaley than elsewhere and natural slate for roofs. Buildings were historically mainly roofed in local slate (now rare) and with 19th century Welsh slate particularly found to the north. The use of cob and survival of now-rare stone slate and combed wheat thatch is highly distinctive. Lime plaster coats typically used for weather protection, notably finished in compressed trowelled lines particularly in the east **(Fig. 4)**. Limewash was commonly used as further protection.

Combed wheat thatch was formerly widespread except on the higher sections of the moor. Roofs were often half hipped and may be steeper than later slated roofs. Roofs were originally unguttered, to allow rainwater to fall onto yards to facilitate cleaning.

Views

Views within this character are generally constrained by topography or 'big' landscape features such as wooded slopes to generally hilly terrain. There are some open views across the reservoir which accentuates the ancient agricultural landscape to much of the character area **(see Fig. 1)**.

Issues

- General topographical constraint to this part of the district with most settlements at a capacity in terms of urban expansion
- Water management in future development is very important and should be a high priority in design terms
- Due to the relative isolation of settlements outside Wiveliscombe sustainable development is going to be very limited

Fig. 4: Troweled mortar joints

3.3.6 Vale of Taunton Deane

6 See Map on page 39

Landscape, topography & geology

The area is characterized by a low-lying but occasionally rolling vale landscape centred around the River Tone and Taunton, extending to up to the northern boundary of Wellington and beyond to the north as far as Lydeard St Lawrence. The area is underlain by a solid surface of Keuper Marls (of the Triassic Mercia Mudstone Group) giving rise to well-drained soils of good agricultural quality.

This part of the district provides a strong sense of being within a contained landscape bowl with the Quantock Hills (to the north and north-east) and Blackdown Hills (to the south). Both these higher land masses give a strong sense of visual and physical containment throughout the character area.

The floodplain has given rise to a linear infrastructure of road (M5), rail, pylon and formerly canal. Pylon lines in particular are prominent features and dominant elements in some open views **(Fig. 1)**.

Settlement types & form

Settlements within the character area comprise the market town of Wellington, villages, dispersed hamlets and farms. The latter are in high density, indicative of pre-11th century settlement and also of post-14th century settlement linked to enclosure. Many hamlets, characteristically with churches, developed from small manorial centres. Later mansions and manor houses (and ornamental gardens) at the foot of Quantock Hills indicate an agriculturally prosperous area, which continues today. Wellington itself is essentially linear along its main streets, with a well-defined market place, lined with long, narrow plots.

Built Form

To the larger settlement of Wellington there are some fine Georgian buildings and high quality red brick Victorian villas to its suburbs. There are a number of high quality and archaeologically significant industrial buildings surviving inside and outside the urban centres. The Historic built form outside of the settlements often comprises farmhouses (and their former working buildings) extensively altered, and in some cases replacement (in the 18th and 19th centuries). This can often include extensive sections of (local and regionally distinctive) stone wall enclosure **(Fig. 2)**.

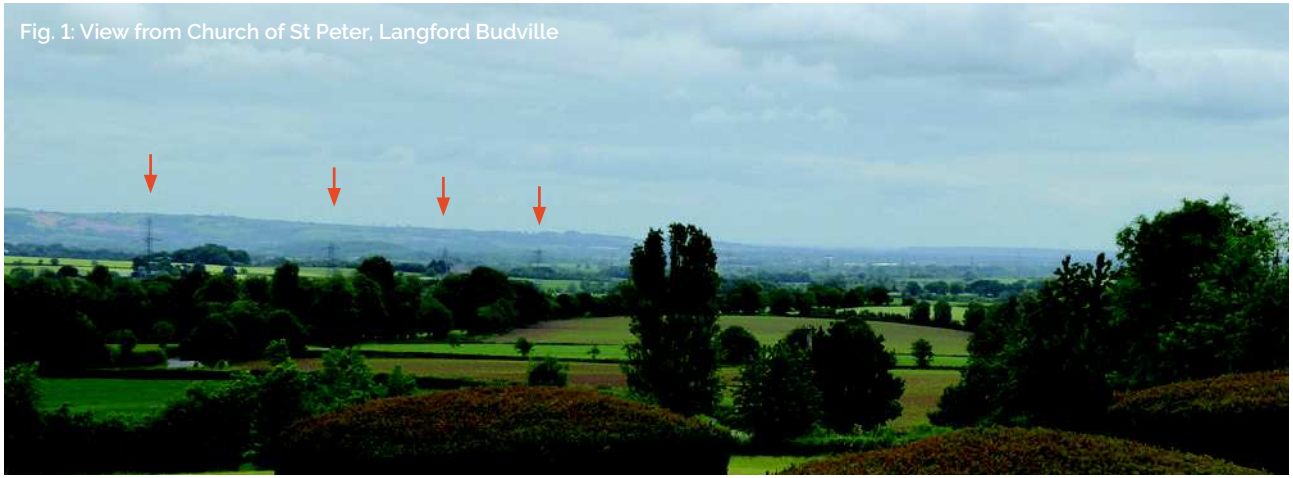


Fig. 1: View from Church of St Peter, Langford Budville

3.3.6 Vale of Taunton Dean (continued)

6 See Map on page 39

There is a high concentration of pre-1750 farmstead buildings (although still relatively few as a percentage of all pre-1900 farm buildings), mostly comprise, farmhouses, threshing barns and some early examples of linhays. Wellington boasts a fine inheritance of Georgian townhouses and former19th century industrial complexes.

Materials

The main settlement is Wellington which has a strong materials palette with its Georgian and Vistorian urban extensions and industrial buildings notable for their high quality red brick and tile tradition. Building materials vary considerably across the vale given the complex geology within and to the edges of this character area. In the north and west red sandstone (often laid in random rubble courses) **(Fig. 3)** is seen to dominate a number of villages (some of these stone buildings are painted and/or rendered – but this is a later alteration), relating to the underlying sandstone geology of the surrounding Quantock Hills and High Vale. In the south and east, stone-built properties are often of Blue or White Lias, reflecting the changing underlying geology on moving eastwards towards Taunton. Brick buildings occur throughout, but are more common in the vicinity of Wellington, reflecting the underlying clay and alluvium of the Low Vale. Slate roofs and clay tile roofs are seen throughout the vale.

Views

Views are generally open and extended (across the floodplain from higher sections of ground) often associated with a church location or ornamental grounds of higher status houses. They are contained by the rising landform of the encircling Quantock or Blackdown Hills. At times these views can be far reaching and extensive. The obelisk of the Wellington Monument standing on the ridge of the Blackdowns, is a familiar sight from the M5.

Issues

- The retention and careful conversion of historic industrial buildings will be an important consideration throughout the character area (but particularly in Wellington)
- The containing of the suburban growth of Wellington will be a significant design challenge
- The erosion of field patterns, water meadows, ridge and furrow, loss of parkland and orchards and other landscape features such as hedgerows are important issues for this vulnerable landscape.
- The issues of flooding will be important in this area with the sensitive design of alleviation measures being a high priority in proposals for development

Fig. 2: Boundary wall enclosure, Bradford on Tone

Fig. 3: Red sandstone walls, Runnington

3.3.7 Taunton

7 See Map on page 39

Taunton Garden Town information

Landscape, topography & geology
A low-lying, typically flat floodplain landform. Defined by the tributaries and main watercourse of the River Tone. Surface geology predominantly defined by Alluvium and River Terrace Deposits. The town is encircled by ridges and hills which provide visual containment to much of the urban area of Taunton.

From Wellington towards the urban edge of the Taunton (urban) character area, the Floodplain is at its widest with its tributary brooks merging with the Tone. Around both of the towns the Floodplain takes on an urban-edge character, with historic and more recent industrial buildings, commercial property, sewage works and houses all forming part of the relatively flat landscape flanking the river. At Taunton, the influence of the urban area is strongly felt where relatively recent and ongoing development on or adjacent to the Floodplain has increased the sense of human intervention into this natural bowl.

Settlement types & form
The settlement of Taunton has medieval origins and an historic core of Castle and Priory lying on the south bank of the River Tone and has expanded in all directions in key phases most notably the 18th and 19th century. (see the map sequence in the document Taunton the Vision for our Garden Town). The pattern of settlement is firmly based on historic plot boundaries and sub-divisions which give the town such a fine grain and some interesting townscape on both an intimate and large scale. The stone church towers of Taunton are particularly prominent in the town and are glimpsed throughout and for some distance from the town and on approach.

A series of satellite villages to the town (and linked by the river and former canal) has been subsumed to degrees into the suburban expansions of the town but have still managed to maintain their cores (often distinguished by a change from brick to stone for walling materials).

3.3.7 Taunton (continued)

7 See Map on page 39

Taunton Garden Town information

Built form

There is a wide variety of built form throughout the town with perhaps the best representative historic industrial buildings surviving (closely followed by Wellington) in the district. These are on both a modest scale (workshops, stables and outbuildings) and larger scale (former shirt and textile factories and buildings relating to the railway/canal infrastructure) **(Fig. 1)**. The terrace house on both small **(Fig. 2)** and large scales **(Fig. 3)** is a notable building type to the town and there are numerous high quality examples to be found throughout.

Fig. 3. Urban Residential Forms above two storeys
These characteristic terraces are formal, relatively short and of varying designs. Similar forms can be found in Wellington.

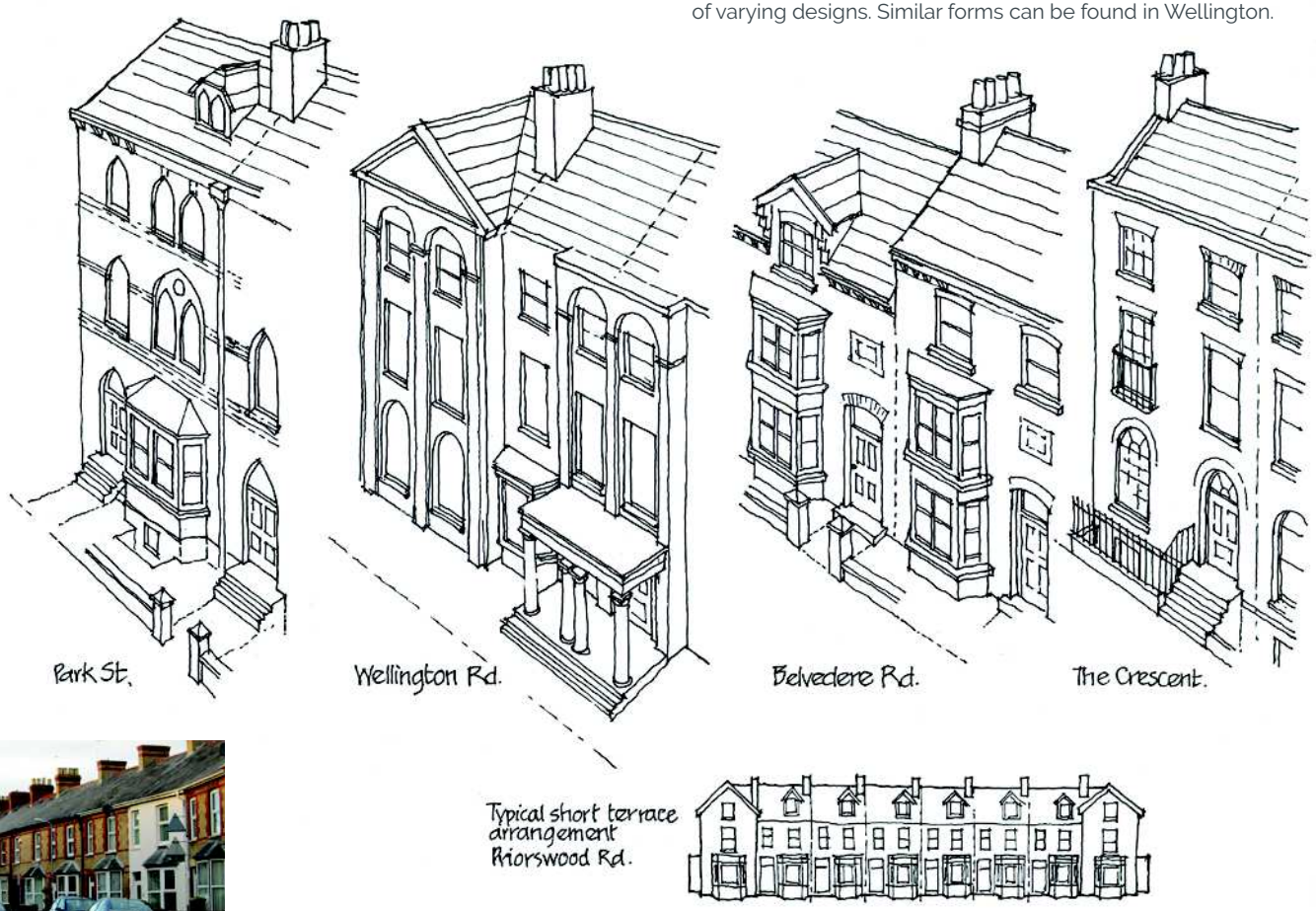



Fig. 1: Firepool Pumping Station, Taunton


Fig. 2: Terrace housing Taunton

3.3.7 Taunton (continued)

7 See Map on page 39

Taunton Garden Town information

Materials

The diversity and mixing of building materials in the town is a feature, with the churches being particularly notable for their extensive (and in some cases comprehensive) use of local materials for both main wall coursing and detailing. The is perhaps best illustrated by the Church of St John, Park Street. Stone is seen frequently in older buildings and to the grander early Victorian terraces, mostly red sandstones, coursed and sometimes used for ashlar work. To the suburbs red (and to a lesser extent buff) brick and natural slate is dominant but often supplemented and enhanced with stone dressings (and vice versa) **(Fig. 4)**.

Views

Views within this character area are often constrained by development and/or the relative flat character of the topography, with the exception of some of the northern suburbs which sit on the base of the Quantocks. The tall square church towers and a spire are always strong landmarks and define the 'centre' of the settlement **(Fig. 5)**. Views out to ridges particularly to the south (to the Blackdown Hills) are often combined and frame the views to church towers. Taunton has benefitted from a lack of tall buildings which has helped maintain the dominance of the church towers. Views into the town are equally important, such as those from Cotlake Hill for example which is strongly characterized by one of the number of green wedges particularly to the south of the town which form part of its setting.

Issues

- Development within this part of the district is very material sensitive and materials vary across the character area. The recent lighting towers for the cricket ground and their illumination and their impact with the skyline demonstrate the issues associated with taller structures.
- The document *Taunton The Vision For Our Garden Town* (July 2019) provides a more detailed understanding of the different characteristics of parts of the town and the importance in maintaining that local distinctiveness throughout.
- New development to the boundaries of the Garden Town has to be sensitively treated
- River frontage in design terms should be carefully handled and used to positive wider gains to the site itself (by, for example, wherever possible maintaining public access)
- Medium rise development is appropriate with a town context, but should be subject to enhanced appraisal of their impact, see Section 5.3.

Fig. 4: Hard sandstone and buff bricks, Taunton

Fig. 5: View to church tower, Taunton (Church of St James)

3.3.8 Clay Plateau

8 See Map on page 39

Landscape, topography & geology

An elevated and dramatically simple, flat landform. The Plateau comprises a strong landscape framework of consistent field patterns principally as a result of enclosure which in-turn has produced long straight roads, drainage ditches and the legacy of WWII airfields.

Farmland is generally defined by improved pasture reflecting the poorer, acidic soils compared with many other parts of Taunton Deane. Stabling and paddocks are a recent feature.

Settlement types & forms

Churchinford is an usually and atypical settlement form comprising the junction of six radial roads at its heart. Otherwise, villages such as Blagdon Hill are linear in character, often only a single plot deep throughout. Outside the villages, settlement form is predominantly individual and groups of farms and their associated buildings. These are partly located on the character area boundary to the north, adjacent to the plateau but mid slope. However, village settlements tend to be set upon the plateau.

Built form

Apart from the compact village of Churchinford **(Fig. 1 & 2)**, (which has some good examples of recent infill), settlements and built form on the plateau is limited. There are a number of dispersed farmhouses, grouped with their associated agricultural buildings. The large agricultural sheds and units are visually prominent, particularly when viewed against an open skyline. Many farmhouses, attached to working buildings are of lower status (than elsewhere within the district). There are some enclosed regular courtyard plans, mostly on larger and high-status farms, often developed or remodelled in the early-mid 19th century. Notably, there are numerous small field barns are a characteristic of the Blackdown Hills.

Fig. 1: Courtyard group, Churchinford

Fig. 2: Good recent infill creating strong corner, Churchinford

3.3.8 Clay Plateau (continued)

8 See Map on page 39

Materials

The Upper Greensand stone formation is capped by Clay-with-Chert. The Chert is a hard orange-light brownish stone **(Fig. 3)** similar geologically to flint and, both whole and knapped. This material is widely used across the Blackdown Hills and is particularly prevalent on the plateau (and in buildings within the adjacent Greensand Valleys) where it is easily sourced. Examples of Chert cottages are found aligning the numerous lanes that converge at the centre of the village of Churchinford. Traditional roof finishes are generally clay tiles (including Bridgwaters), some thatch (combed wheat reed) and some natural slate.

Views

There are very limited opportunities for views once onto the plateau although the long straight roads provide a good depth of vision to a generally open landscape. There are spectacular and almost district defining views **(Fig. 4)** to the northern edge of the character area, across the vale to Taunton and Wellington and beyond to the Quantocks and the Brendon Hills (and Exmoor National Park). These views give a strong sense of landscape structure of the district and the importance of the 'circle' of hills around the central vale.

Issues

- Limited and sensitive opportunities for development may still exist. Edge conditions, layout and form will be particularly important in this character area
- The presence of large agricultural sheds can have a disruptive impact on the tranquil and open views of this part of the district

Fig. 3: Use of chert for cottages, Churchinford

Fig. 4: View of Taunton from Blagdon Hill

3.3.9 Fivehead Vale

9 See Map on page 39

Landscape, topography & geology.
This character area comprises a vale landscape based around a number of tributary streams of the Fivehead River, in the adjacent district of South Somerset. The elevation varies from 35-200m AOD producing a rolling terrain - the landscape being lower and flatter to the east and north rising and becoming more undulating in the west and south.

The area is strongly defined by a geology of Blue Lias; blue-grey and honey coloured stone used consistently, forming a strongly defined local vernacular.

Settlement types & forms
There are individual dwellings and farm groups dispersed across the Vale with settlement clusters at the nucleated villages of Corfe, Staple Fitzpaine and Hatch Beauchamp, as well as a number of hamlets (generally dispersed settlement) such as West Hatch and Curland.

Built form
Simple vernacular building form. Generally simple two storey, gables with steeply pitched roofs. Farm groups are generally regular courtyard types with multi-function buildings on a small scale.

(Fig. to follow)

3.3.9 Fivehead Vale (continued)

9 See Map on page 39

Materials

The entire character area is underlain and therefore strongly defined by Blue Lias comprising limestones and clays. This area forms the westernmost part of the Blue Lias dip slope that extends east, beyond Taunton Deane. Blue Lias is widely seen to buildings has a blue-grey **(Fig. 2)** and sometimes honey-coloured (White Lias) colour and is often combined with other materials for dressings such as Ham stone. Its friable characteristics mean that it has often been later rendered and painted with this walling finish often forming part of the character of groups of buildings.

Views

Views within this character area are often intermittent or broken due to the landform, woodland cover and strong hedgerows. There are areas of higher ground that do offer well-defined views with Staple Fitzpaine church forming a strong landmark **(Fig. 3)**. There are also more extensive open views descending into the Vale of Taunton Deane, for example. These can extend to the Quantock Hills and also east into the gently rolling landscape of South Somerset.

Issues

- A general lack of supply of Blue Lias stonework (this is also a district-wide issue) means a default use of rendered walls which can lead to an erosion of the distinct character of some parts of this character area where the stone is so dominant.
- In new development locally distinctive materials such as Blue Lias should be used to their maximum effect, such as for key buildings or boundary walls
- Infill should reflect the character, form and layout of host settlements and buildings

Fig. 2: Blue Lias rubblestone, Corfe

Fig. 3: Tower, Church of St Peter, Staple Fitzpaine

3.3.10 Sandstone Ridge

10 See Map on page 39

Landscape, topography & geology

The North Curry Sandstone Ridge is a relatively prominent landscape feature comprising an undulating, well-defined ridge that rises out of the surrounding Clay and Peat Moors. It is the sharp juxtaposition of ridge and flat surrounding moorland (drained inland marsh) that defines this character area.

Distinctive pollarded willows flank embanked rivers, drains, rhynes and droves that form strong linear patterns across the Moors. Fields of withies reflect the tradition of willow-weaving.

Settlement types & forms

The ridge is a settled landscape, comprising two main villages North Curry and Stoke St Gregory – as well as the linear hamlets (Meare Green and Knapp) in addition to a large number of individual farms throughout.

North Curry is the larger of the two settlements with both having nucleated urbane centres; North Curry is unusually focussed around a village green **(Fig. 1)** and comprises groups of 18th century terraced brick (and rendered) cottages as well as larger houses which strongly define the green and give a strong sense of place. Six roads converge at North Curry and the settlement pattern has extended along these radial routes giving it a relatively dispersed character beyond its well-defined centre.

Fig. 1: Townscape, North Curry

3.3.10 Sandstone Ridge (continued)

10 See Map on page 39

Built form

Both North Curry and Stoke St Gregory have prominent churches that form part of views to the ridge from some distance within the hinterland. The church of St Peter and St Paul at North Curry and the church of St Gregory are both notable for their octagonal bell towers, two of a number of such towers found in the region.

Materials

The North Curry Sandstone (a green-grey stone) **(Fig. 2)** is a consistent building material found across the ridge, as is red brick, painted render (usually over stone) and clay pantiles.

Views

Extensive views from the ridgeline and sides across the low-lying surrounding wetland **(Fig. 3)** and beyond can be enjoyed and these can extend across the Vale of Taunton Deane and Quantock Hills as well as to the east across the Somerset Levels.

Issues

- Attractive informal street terraces should define the design approach to development both within and to the fringes of settlements and hamlets
- The prominent character of the edges of settlement (particularly in long views) makes then particularly sensitive to change

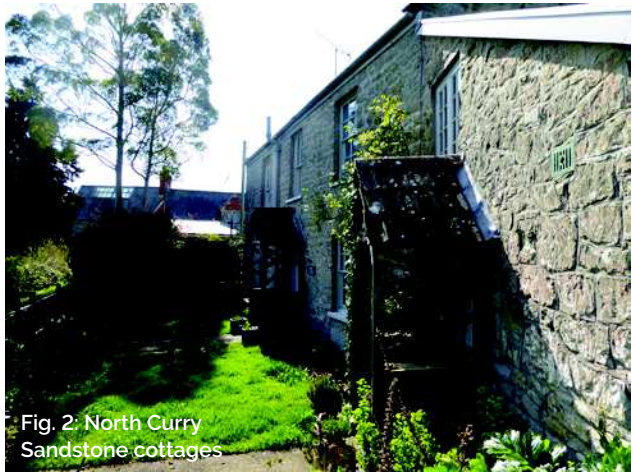


Fig. 2: North Curry Sandstone cottages

Fig. 3: View north from Church of St Peter and St Paul

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4.0 SUSTAINABLE PLACEMAKING

4.1 Integrating Placemaking with Sustainability

The design agendas for Placemaking and Sustainability are often considered separately, as different disciplines. However, the reality is that the aims of one can be reconciled and integrated with the other, producing resilient, healthy and attractive places. Similarly, the design of the built environment and the green infrastructure should be considered together.

The indicative diagrams, (pages 66 and 68) illustrate Placemaking principles and Sustainable principles integrated within the same scheme.

The diagram illustrates the design framework for a new neighbourhood. For the purposes of illustration and clarity, the scheme is compressed somewhat and an actual neighbourhood would be larger. Nevertheless, it is expected that prospective schemes would demonstrate that they are including the features of good practice shown in the diagram. Neighbourhood facilities and services should be incorporated as much as possible, dependent on size of the neighbourhood and convenient distance to existing facilities.

Taunton Garden Town information

For new schemes within the Taunton Garden Town area, this is especially relevant, given the Aims, Vision and Charter and checklist for the area. In schemes for allocated sites in other parts of the district, it is expected that the majority of the features shown will be incorporated, subject to individual circumstances. Where schemes have been consented subject to reserved matters, relevant aspects shown will be the subject of negotiation, with the aim of incorporating as many features as possible. Similarly, when existing neighbourhoods are being renewed or improved, it is likely that many of these features should be retrofitted.

Sustainable principles within the indicative scheme

Green and blue infrastructure shapes the spaces and places between buildings.

- Sustainable urban drainage system includes the retention of existing drainage ditches. New swales reinforce this pattern. The green wedge, rain gardens, allotments and other green spaces absorb water, as well as the hedgerows, trees, verges, boundary hedges and private gardens. Semi porous paved surfaces for footpaths and hardstandings also contribute to water absorption.
- Opportunities for food growing are provided in the micro allotments and community orchard. Other potential opportunities could be urban smallholdings, managed through a community spaces trust.
- Active travel is facilitated through the dense, legible and attractive network of foot and cycle paths which permeate the neighbourhood, linking to the neighbourhood hub and bus priority routes. Play areas, formal sports provision and fitness tracks.
- Bicycle storage is integrated into individual house design or in small housing groups to maximise usage. Similarly, recycling storage is integrated into house design.
- Over 90% of houses and other buildings have photovoltaic panels integrated into the roof design. Roofs are oriented in a southerly or westerly axis. All car parking bays have electric car charging points.
- Extensive tree planting in the streetscape, rain gardens community orchard and the reinforcement of hedgerows fosters biodiversity, contributes to air quality, CO2 capture, aesthetic quality and sense of wellbeing.
- Bat, swallow and owl nesting is encouraged in the integration of nesting boxes into some gable ends. Sedum planting on flat roofs and 'green walls' also encourage biodiversity.

Indicative scheme incorporating sustainable principles

Placemaking principles within the indicative scheme

The same layout demonstrates the use of good practice principles in placemaking and placeshaping.

- Legible hierarchy of streets (major to minor), public spaces, footpaths and shared spaces.

Area 1: Neighbourhood Hub
May vary in size depending on population and distance from existing facilities.

- Square. Nodal point of foot routes. Bus stop. Event and market space. Direct access to the school, community centre, shops/businesses, health centre.
- School; usually primary/middle.
- Community centre; library/resource centre, meeting rooms, office, place of worship, etc.
- Shops/n/hood mini market, café, business/ service premises.
- Health centre/pharmacy.
- Shared car park, serving all the Hub uses.

Area 2: Urban Blocks
Housing is designed within urban blocks, with a clear distinction between frontages accessible from the public realm and private rear gardens. In larger blocks, permeable mews yards are inserted and the rear spaces can also accommodate rain gardens, toddler play spaces or micro allotments. (see also fig X, residential block design).

Car parking is accommodated in 'parking streets', small courts, some 'on plot' spaces in townhouses, flats over garages and in lower density houses.

A clear density hierarchy is demonstrated both within blocks and the scheme overall. Higher density housing is located in close proximity to the community hub and/or to the bus route. Medium and lower density respectively is located further from the hub, although easily connected within walking distance. The density range also incorporates a variety of house types and tenures, see list below:-

- Apartments, 3&4 storey, many over shops and businesses, adjacent to hub.
- Sheltered housing or similar, within easy walking distance to hub and bus stops.
- Higher density terrace family housing.
- Semi detached and short terrace 2 storey housing.
- Lower density housing.
- Flats over garages.
- Single storey patio houses.
- Focal point building; with ground floor mixed use option.
- Key Group.

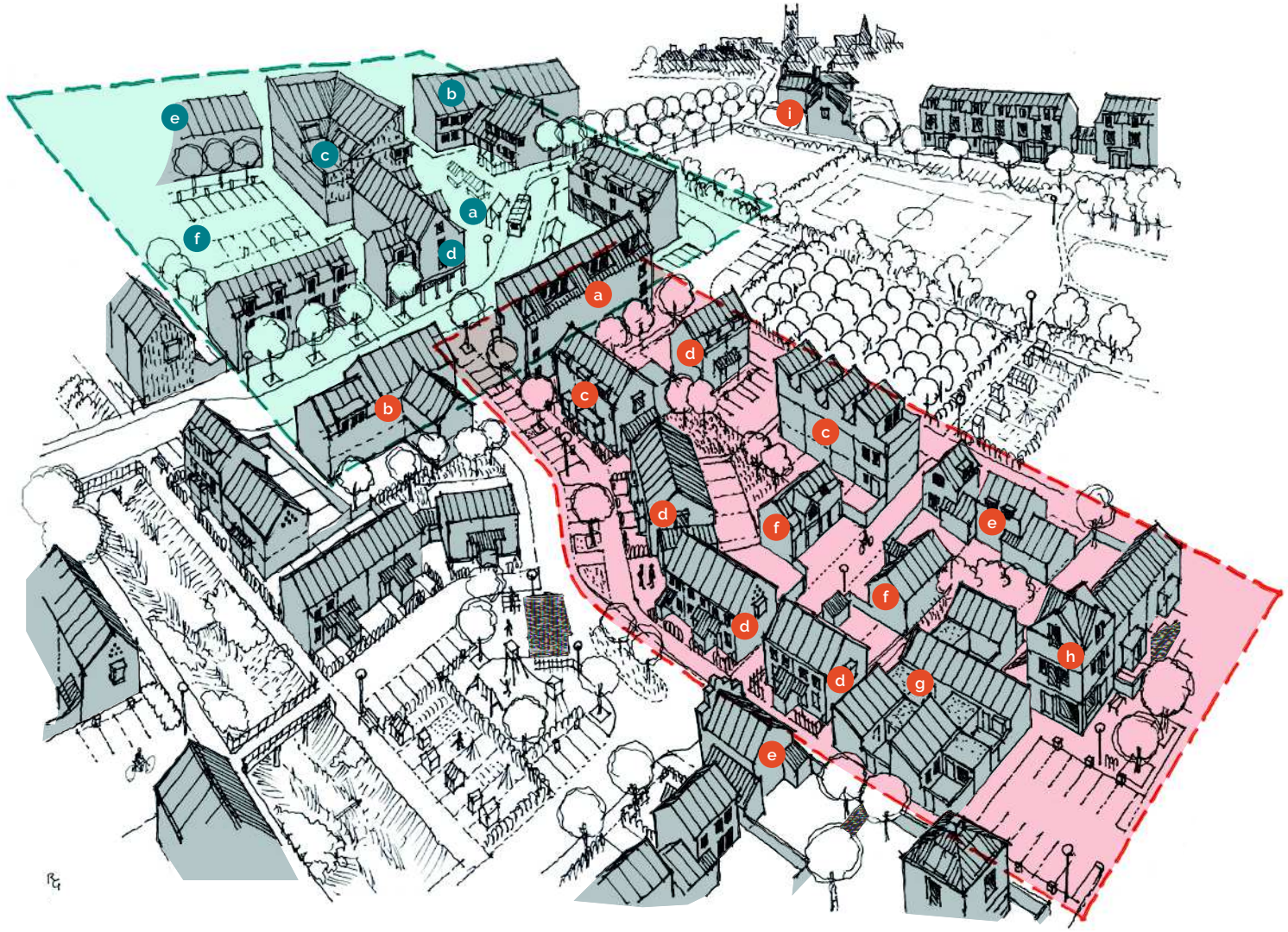
Indicative scheme incorporating placemaking principles

Area 1: Neighbourhood Hub

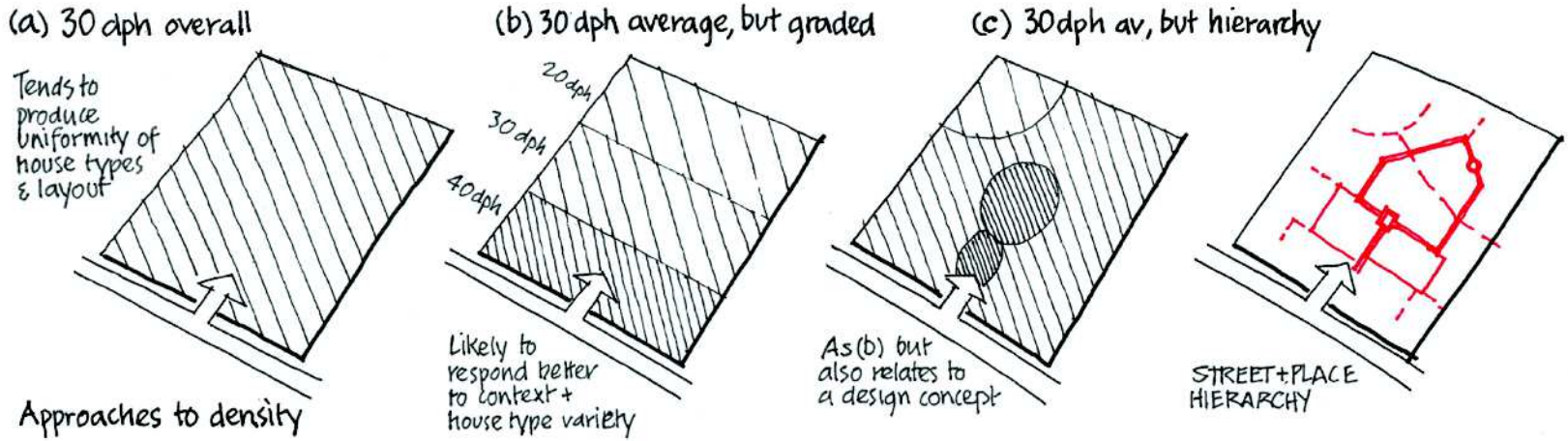
- a Square.
- b School; usually primary/middle.
- c Community centre; library/resource centre, meeting rooms, office, place of worship, etc.
- d Shops/n/hood mini market, café, business/service premises.
- e Health centre/pharmacy.
- f Shared car park, serving all the Hub uses.

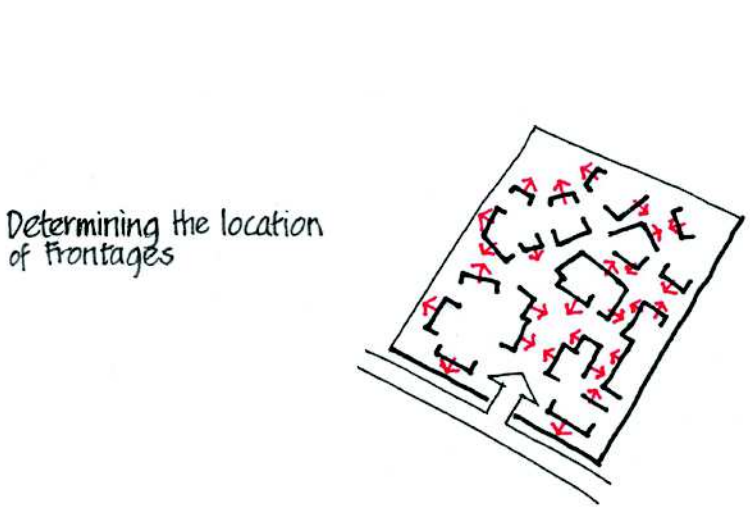
Area 2: Urban Blocks

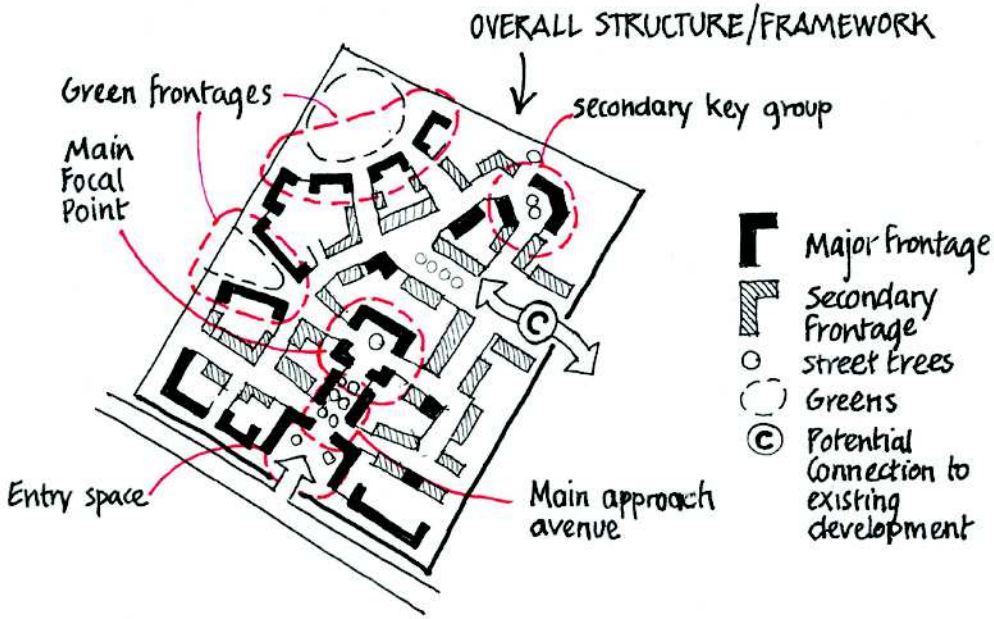
- a Apartments, 3&4 storey, many over shops and businesses, adjacent to hub.
- b Sheltered housing or similar, within easy walking distance to hub and bus stops.
- c Higher density terrace family housing.
- d Semi detached and short terrace 2 storey housing.
- e Lower density housing.
- f Flats over garages.
- g Single storey patio houses.
- h Focal point building; with ground floor mixed use option.
- i Key Group.



4.2 Site Structuring







4.3 Housing typologies related to their role in placemaking

Good places can be created by forming townscapes and streetscapes from the way that individual houses are grouped. Each of the conditions in this section are the components which can contribute to effective placemaking. Together, they can help to integrate new development within or on the edge of well-established settlements or create coherent free-standing new developments.

The principles of this guidance are relevant for developments of the range of sizes, from intimate individual groups to major residential neighbourhoods, although the scale of the building designs should be appropriate to village, suburban or urban contexts, at a range of densities. It is likely that some house types may embody more than one condition, eg; key group and focal point, or curvature and continuity. The conditions are illustrated in the diagrams on the following pages. Good places are also formed from good street design; guidance on this is found in Section 4.4 and should be read in conjunction with this guidance.

Condition	Context	Characteristics	Illustration
Continuity	It is likely that the majority of houses may fall into this category, whether terraces, semidetached, individual dwellings or apartment blocks.	(a) In established streets of valued character, new development should respect existing building lines, spacing between houses, front boundaries, plots, scale, height, roof design and possibly details, including fenestration. (b) In new development areas, design codes can be used to establish the character of proposed streets by setting design parameters as in (a) above. This is especially important to achieve coordination between different housebuilders.	To follow
Accent	Where the continuity of the street design benefits from a slight interruption to heighten visual interest.	Continuity is often enlivened by the introduction of occasional accents. These might include slight projections in front of the building line, change of alignment of roof ridge, change of material or the addition of an extra storey	To follow
Curvature	Street continuity can be 'nudged' to follow contours or follow existing street alignments or site boundaries. Curvature can be used to townscape effect in deflecting views, or opening up new vistas along the length of a street.	A curving street frontage can be achieved by:- (a) Introducing a simple angled house type, for instance the setting of one party wall at, say, 100 degrees, rather than 90 degrees to the façade. (b) Changing the alignment of garages, stores or above eye level boundary walls.	To follow

Condition	Context	Characteristics	Illustration
Corners	Where street junctions occur, often creating an abrupt change of street or building character. The design of corner buildings can influence driver behaviour, through the limiting of sight lines.	A corner building (or buildings) presents an architectural opportunity, as it is seen in three dimensions and often incorporates a change of scale, eg from major street frontage to minor street. The level of architectural/stylistic response should be appropriate to context; the cliched use of poor copies of Victorian/Edwardian style 'pepperpot' corner features should be avoided.	To follow
Focal Points	Typically, a focal point is located to terminate the vista at the end of a street. It gives coherence to the street design and conveys the message to drivers the need to come to a halt at a junction.	The design should, by the location of the building on the street axis and its primary elevation, be designed to be coherent at a relatively long distance, terminating the vista. The building may or may not be symmetrical, but should assert itself, for instance presenting a gable end or extra storey, to emphasise its effect. It may be that window and door size and proportion should be increased, in relation to its neighbours, or that an assertive colour be employed.	To follow
Key Groups	Where small groups of units are grouped at critical points in the townscape/streetscape, to address a green, a boundary at a settlement edge, an entry point to a development, or a square. Key groups may also be appropriate to address existing landscape features, such as large trees.	Key groups can be formal, such as a square, or a more informal massing, depending on the context and scale of the proposals and the setting. Individual units will be closely grouped in terraces or other linked arrangements to enclose or to coherently address a space. Massing and sense of appropriate enclosure are the critical aspects of the design solution.	To follow

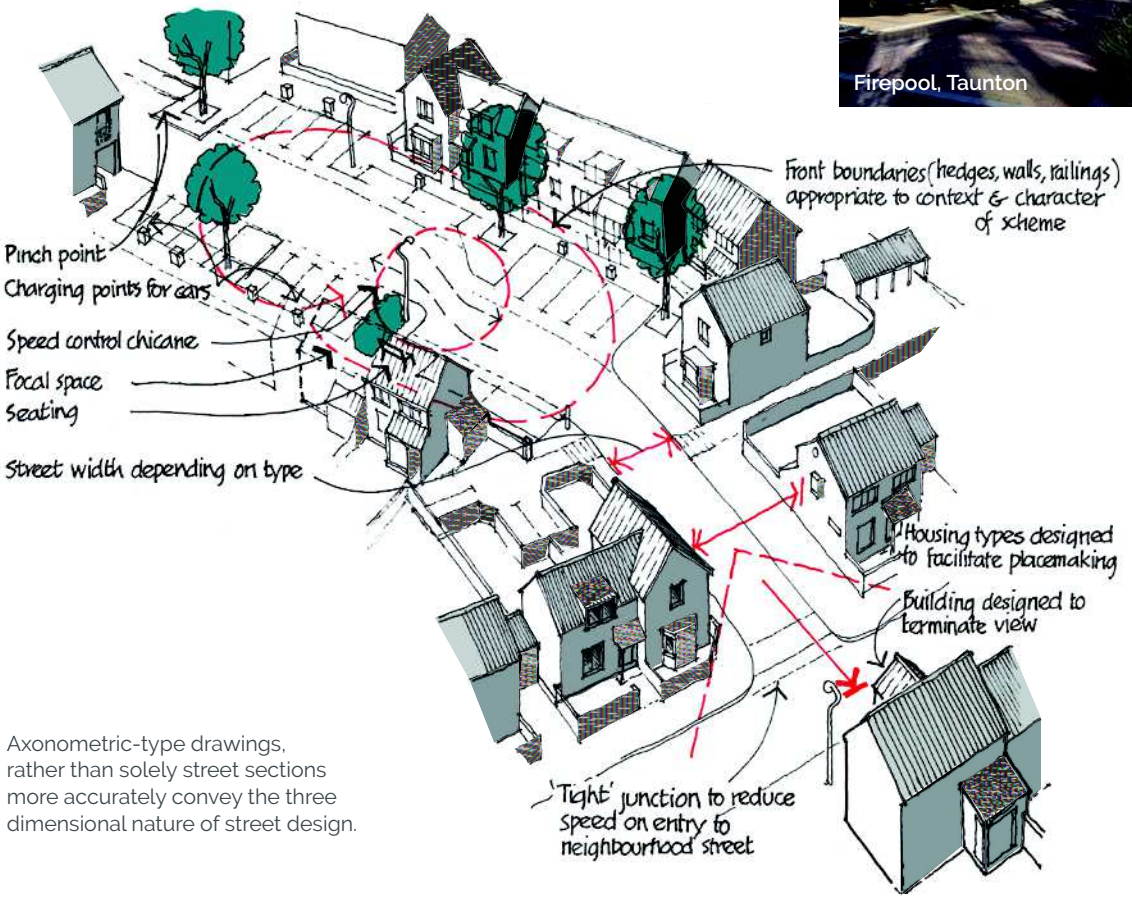
Condition	Context	Characteristics	Illustration
Building on gradients	Where sites, or parts of sites are sloping at about 5% or steeper, or there are abrupt changes of level of over 500mm. These can present architectural opportunities and require designing in section as much as plan to achieve benefits. Pedestrian and vehicular access will be a factor. The handling of drainage will be necessary in the streetscape design.	Sloping sites can present architectural opportunities, but require solutions to be designed in section as much as in plan from the outset. The stepping of buildings should be as gentle as possible, to avoid excessive changes of level and large areas of exposed retaining wall and/or excessive areas of excavation to provide large building platforms. Street elevations will normally be required to assess effects. Skyline impact may be a factor (see below).	To follow
Skylines/ rooflines	Where the proposed development is visible against or protruding above a valued landscape skyline, as seen from certain key viewpoints. The roofline design may also be critical within the wider townscape, especially when seen against landmarks or established rooflines which contribute to the character of a place.	The roofline of the proposed development should be considered for its long-view impact. For instance a repetitive 'sawtooth pattern of gable ends, especially in an assertive colour scheme (eg white or yellow) could be excessively intrusive, whereas a more varied roofline, interspersed with trees might be more appropriate. Of course, and exceptionally, it may be appropriate to introduce skyline interest above an established line. The case for this would have to be justified.	To follow
Infill	Where an individual building or small group replaces another/others in an established streetscape. Typical requirements include the increasing of volume and/or height for the proposed development, or a change of use which may have elevational/massing implications.	The design solution would need to be assessed on its merits, but almost all the conditions above would need to be taken into account. Context appraisal in particularly important.	To follow

4.4 Streets, parking & placemaking

The design of residential streets is now regarded as an integral element of placemaking (see Manual for Streets 1 & 2 and the National Design Guide). It is recognised that the arrangement of buildings and the layout of the spaces between them can be used to reduce vehicular speeds and accommodate the parked car in an attractive streetscape. Moreover, street layout can be made more flexible through the use of 'tracking' requirements of vehicles such as recycling collection vehicles and removals vans, rather than purely the application of standard road widths and turning bays. At the minor end of the hierarchy of streets, shared spaces such as mews courts are appropriate, where vehicle speeds are reduced to less than 10mph, through the enclosure of the space and the 'tightness' of junctions.

The indicative illustration shows some of these principles being used to create a residential street, absorbing on-street parking and some on-plot parking. Wherever possible surfaces should be semi porous and verges trees included to facilitate natural drainage. It is recommended that negotiation with Somerset County Council Highways and reference to their standards is initiated at an early stage, especially to agree adoption levels for parking and street trees. The parking standards for housing near town centres and bus routes and in infill schemes could be at a lower ratio per dwelling, especially where car share clubs exist. On-street charging points should be provided.

Firepool, Taunton



Axonometric-type drawings, rather than solely street sections more accurately convey the three dimensional nature of street design.

5.0 DESIGN TOPICS

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5.1 Introduction

The following Design Topic studies comprise detailed advice and guidance on particular aspects, following the initial stages of the design process.

Taunton Garden Town information

Many of these Topics will be relevant to development in Taunton Garden Town.

IMAGE TO FOLLOW

5.2 Lifetime homes, designing for accessibility; ergonomic design

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5.3 Taller buildings

Context

The centres of the three largest towns in the District, Taunton, Wellington and Minehead, have pre-1960 individual buildings of no higher than 5 storeys (excluding church towers) and most town centre buildings of between 3.5* to 4.5* storeys. Since the 1960's Taunton has seen a few individual buildings of up to 8 storeys (eg; County Hall, 8 storeys* maximum, Debenhams support centre, 7 storeys). Recently, a few more buildings of this height range have been constructed (Viridor offices, Firepool apartments and those on the north side of the Cricket Ground).

Assessing Impact

This trend towards increased building heights is likely to grow. Hence it is important to set out guidelines to assess the impact and appropriate height of buildings above 6 storeys, or 19 metres.

The existing Local Plan outlines broad criteria(xx) for assessing the impact of taller building proposals and Historic England Policy Note (xx) contains useful guidance.

This Design Topic draws on and expands upon these sources and relates them to the context of the district.

It is important to ensure that the design, height and location of tall buildings (whether point towers or 'slabs') are considered as a contribution to placemaking; ie; what is their 'role' in the townscape? Landmark, gateway, a component of new streetscape making (boulevard architecture, new square, etc.). Overall, they should be considered a positive contribution to the skyline, respectful of established views to existing landmarks and views to the countryside beyond.

Indicative criteria. These aspects should be analysed rigorously in a Design and Access Statement, where the evolution of the design rationale should be shown. Computer generated imagery is likely to be used.

- Proposed building type/use, storey heights/ building height, quantum/volume.
- Proposed location. Site and building footprint (setbacks, boundaries, car parking, etc)
- Relationship to Conservation Areas, Heritage Assets and the setting of these.
- Relationship to key long and short views to the church towers of St Mary Magdalene, St James and St John. (These specified on the accompanying map).
- Relationship to long views from the Quantock Hills and Blackdown Hills AoNBs and views between the proposal and the backdrop of these hills.
- Assessment of immediate streetscene impact. Street vistas, impact on rooflines. Frontages, (active or not).
- Assessment of neighbourhood impact; overshadowing, overlooking, microclimate.
- Assessment of proposed materials; colour, texture, reflectance.
- Assessment of fenestration/elevational design.
- Assessment of proposed profile, especially the skyline.

It will be expected that taller buildings will be of exceptional architectural quality.

Building projects within this category will automatically be referred to a Design Review Panel.

***Storey heights**

Storey heights obviously vary considerably and therefore specifying building height by number of storeys, whilst convenient, might not always reflect an expected building height. For instance, a modern office building may have a floor to floor height of anything between 3.5 and 4.5m, whereas an apartment building may have a floor to floor height about 3m.

Traditionally, storey heights vary within a building, for instance a Georgian townhouse, where an attic and basement storey may be no more than 2.2m, whereas the main reception rooms might have floor to ceiling heights of 3.6m or more. Where a building height is expressed as, for example, 3.5 storeys, this reflects the apparent height of a 4 storey building with an attic storey, which has a diminished visual impact, as seen from the street.

"Beat dolor sinus ut eat aut excest alitat or abore nit antiaecab in eatiore, solli em ex et alique rende quas aceri consequi omnim et venimagnimus inulpa que paruptas poremposs."

Quote from Historic England Guidance

"Dinus ut eat aut excest alitat or abore nit antiaecab in eatiore, solli em ex et alique rende quas aceri consequi omnim et venimagnimus inulpa que paruptas poremposs."

Quote from SWT Local Plan

5.4 Non-residential development

This topic encompasses a wide variety of development types, including offices, retail, leisure, manufacturing, educational, community and healthcare buildings at different scales. Therefore, each application will be determined on its merits.

Due to their impact, especially in established street scenes or on the edge of settlements, where landscape impacts are crucial, it is essential that developers and designers undertake the appraisals of context and site and develop sensitive design concepts as set out in Section 2.0 and produce well considered Design and Access Statements Section 6.2. Additionally, these developments may be located in conservation areas, which require context responsive design solutions. It is likely that most schemes will be considered at Design Review panels Section 6.5.

The following general design considerations are likely to be relevant, wholly or in part.

Footprint and site planning
In general, the street building line should be followed, to ensure appropriate continuity and enclosure in the street scene. Frontage set backs for car parking, servicing or hard or soft landscaping should be avoided, as this has an eroding effect on the streetscape. The only exceptions are likely to be around the entrances of buildings which generate significant footfall, such as major retail developments, places of worship, schools, etc. In these cases, the setback should be designed as a forecourt, framing the entrance. Sometimes these areas can be set behind boundary railings, which serve to re-establish the building line. Car parking, servicing bays and recycling storage should be located towards the rear of the site and appropriately laid out to minimise nuisance for neighbouring properties.

Massing, scale and height
Where the proposals are generally larger in scale than adjacent properties, the volume of the building should be articulated to avoid abrupt changes in height and storey heights, especially adjoining the neighbouring properties. Consider developing the site in depth or recessing the taller elements behind the perceived general zone of storey heights. It is generally appropriate to avoid excessive horizontal elevational emphasis within the established street scene (see also diagram in 5.6). This can be done, for example, by emphasising structural bays and using vertically proportioned windows. In shopping developments, avoid long continuous fascias for the same reason.

Active Frontages

As a general rule within a busy street scene, new development should enhance street vitality by locating entrances on the street frontage and placing all the populated internal spaces (offices, concourses etc) on the frontage with extensive glazing. Large stretches of blank wall should be avoided.

Roofscape

On larger buildings, roof design can have a considerable impact, at close quarters and on long views. Within established townscapes and on edge of settlement sites, it is usually desirable to break down the perceived volume of larger buildings. This can be done by varying the height of different elements of the building, or by using the discipline imposed by the geometry of pitched roofs to give skyline interest, incorporate photovoltaic panels or accommodate rooftop plant. Roof design can also offer opportunities for daylighting, roof terraces or providing green roofs.

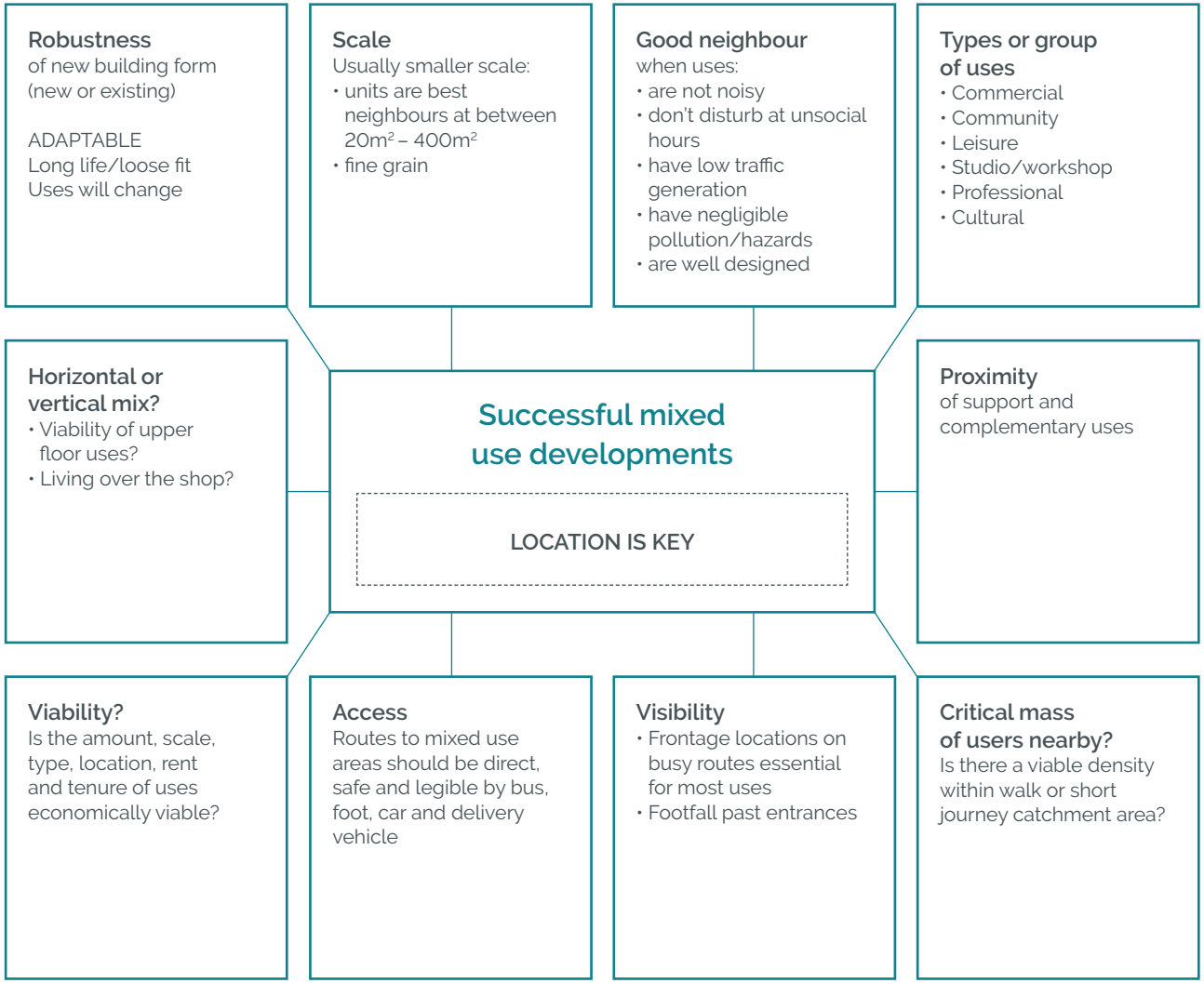
Colour, texture, materials and signage. The elevational use of these can be used to create surface scale and interest, relate to the townscape or landscape setting. Signage should be considered as an integral part of the design. These aspects should be shown on application drawings.

NB; diagrams to follow.

Sensitively designed community centre, with welcoming entrance area, interesting roofscape and use of local materials as cladding. Trull.

5.5 Mixed uses

Buildings incorporating more than one use are usually grouped in order to maximise footfall to the premises and foster interaction between small scale enterprises. Location is often critical, to ensure visibility and footfall and therefore traditionally these uses are to be found on well used routes (especially foot and bus) especially at intersections, or in squares. Where uses rely on footfall, it is likely that these will thrive in higher density locations or places which attract visitors. Locations where mixed uses are unlikely to thrive are in 'cul de sacs', in the centre of low density areas, on upper floors. By definition, mixed use developments are varied in type, size, and scale. Additionally, their impact in terms of traffic generation, noise and smell, activity in anti-social times must be taken into account when determining these uses within residential areas. Therefore, each case has to be considered on its merits.

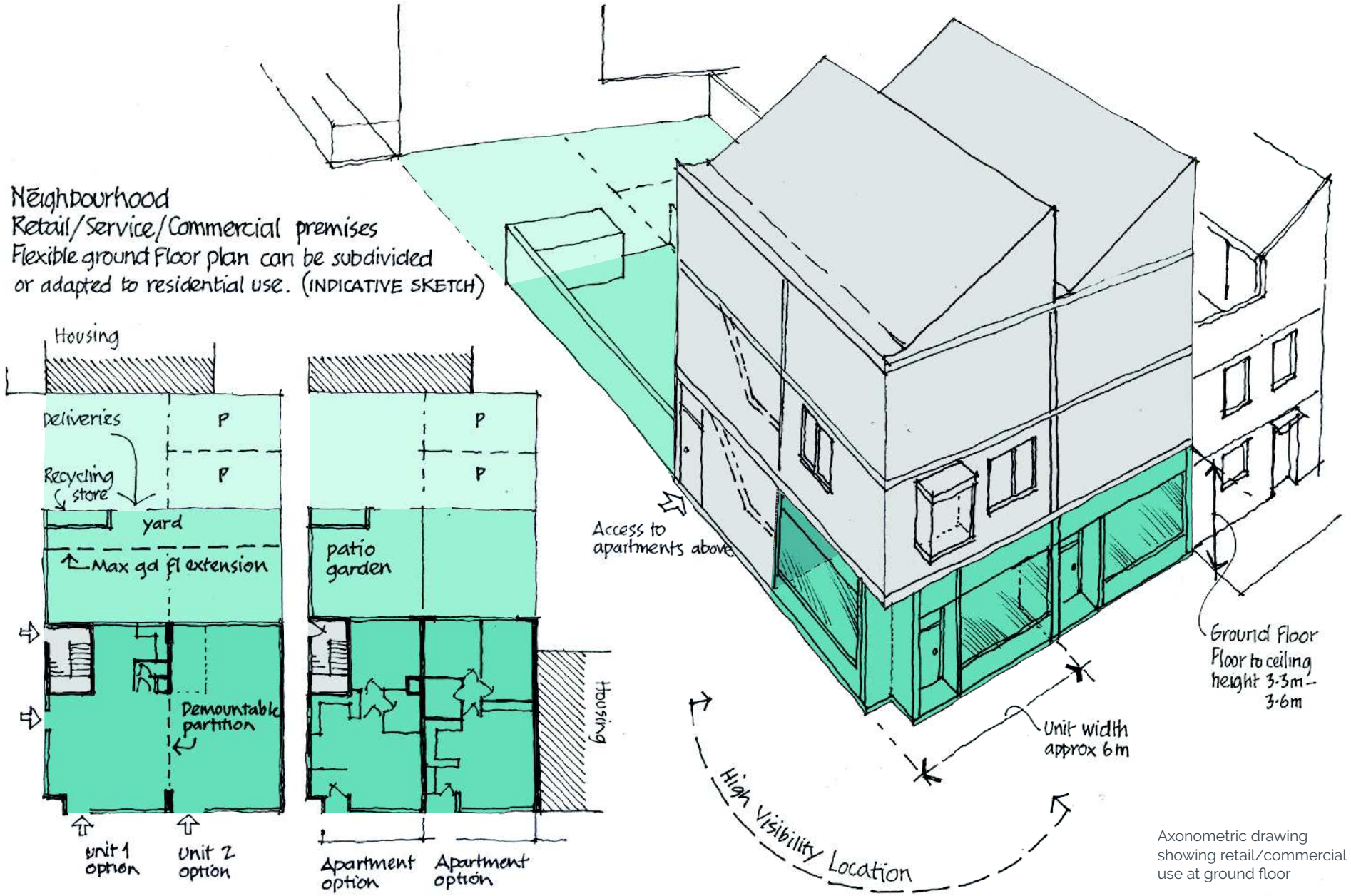


New build mixed use premises require a structure which is flexible in terms of layout options and which is appropriate to, for example, residential accommodation on the upper floors. It is likely therefore, that a frame structure is appropriate.

The indicative scheme on th efollowing page shows a building with a 6m structural span, (or 5.5m minimum), which is appropriate for a shop unit and residential accommodation above. This structural grid can also accommodate two car parking spaces. A structural grid allows for business display windows and for two or more units to be amalgamated. As many uses require a floor to ceiling height above the usual residential 2.4m, the illustration shows a ground floor height of between 3.3-3.6m. allowing for a service zone, suspended ceiling (if required) and fascia. In the initial stages of a new neighbourhood development, conditions may not be such that a business is viable. The scheme shows an option where the ground floor can be designed for apartments, with the ability for future conversion to business premises. Similarly, the rear space can be a patio garden for the apartments, or the option for premises to extend the ground floor to a limited degree.

See also Section 5.4 and Section 5.6.

Mixed use development in Taunton



Axonometric drawing showing retail/commercial use at ground floor

RG

5.6 Infill and intensification

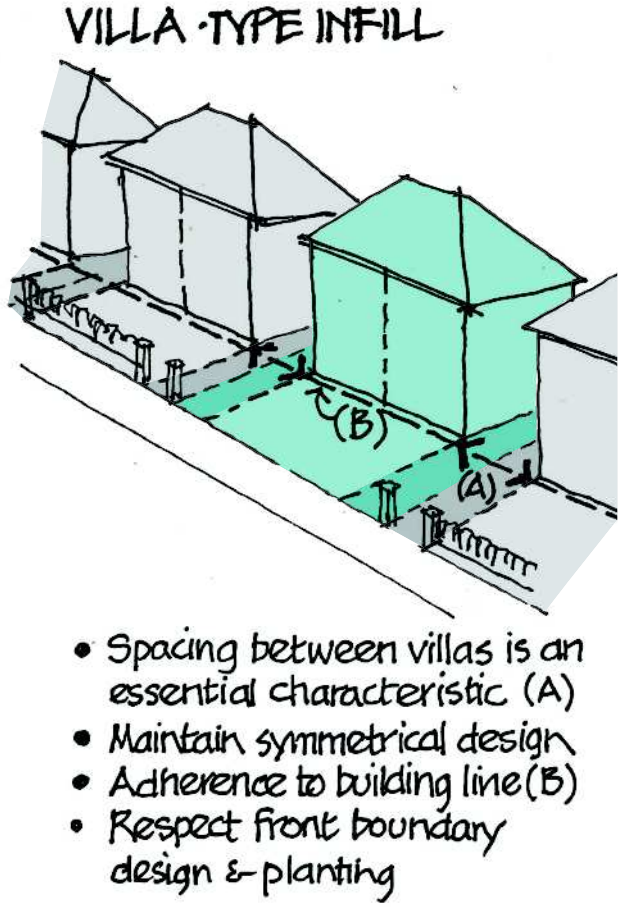
A significant amount of development in the district takes place within settlements, usually on previously developed land and usually with frontages onto streets or in the rear of plots, behind existing frontages. This is normally a positive state of affairs, as development within settlements is a sustainable principle as it means less expansion into greenfield sites and potentially the creation of more users of local services and businesses within walking distance.

However, this positive trend has to be balanced with the pressure to increase the volume of new development, the scale of new buildings and the requirements of parking and vehicular servicing.

The NPPF, National Design Guide and Local Plans all require that new development respond to the distinctiveness and character of the existing environment. Moreover, development proposed within a conservation area, or the setting of one, or involving the extension of a listed building or affecting its setting, will require particular design sensitivity. See Section 5.13. Where Conservation Area Character Appraisals and/or Village Design Statements have been compiled for specific settlements, these will provide useful information and should be consulted.

As infill and intensification occurs in towns, villages and suburban locations, the overall scale of development should be appropriate to each environment. For instance, town scale development will be inappropriate to a village setting and suburban scales and forms will be inappropriate in the tighter streetscape of a town.

Therefore, it is essential that an applicant's Design & Access Statement demonstrates that the design solution responds to and derives from an appraisal both of the context of the site (its wider landscape setting and the immediate streetscape) and the site itself (adjacent properties, boundaries, on-site features, changes of level and possible heritage assets). The subsequent Design Concept should demonstrate how this appraisal helps to establish the bulk, scale, impact and visual character of the proposals. The guidance in Section 2.5 will help to inform this process.



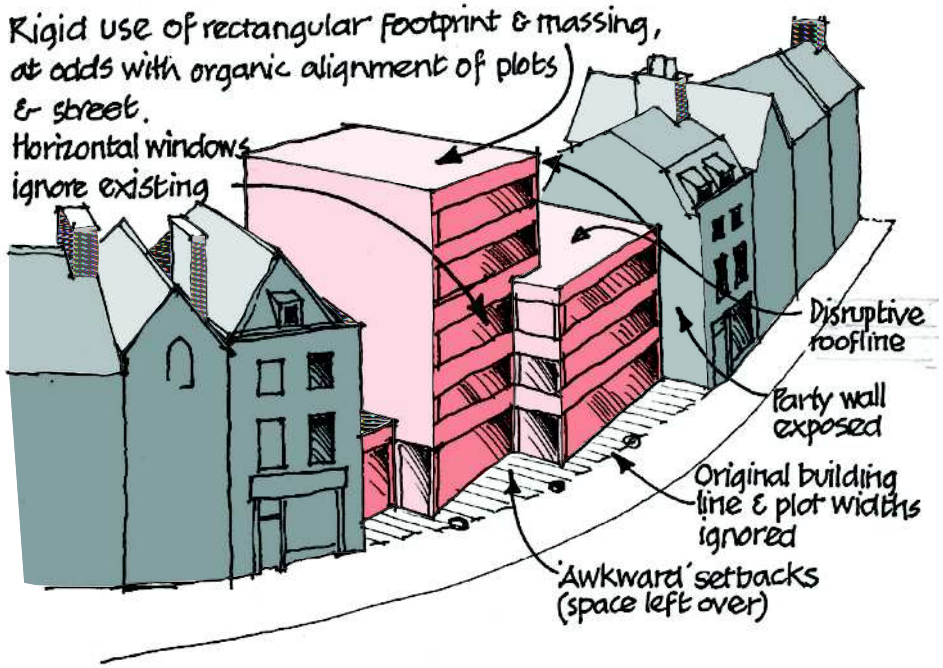
CONTEXT-RESPONSIVE APPROACH

- Site & street alignment respected
- Dominant pattern of plot widths acknowledged in the design
- Roofline continuity integrated into the design

STREET FRONTAGE INFILL

'CUBIC' DESIGN APPROACH

- Rigid use of rectangular footprint & massing, at odds with organic alignment of plots & street.
- Horizontal windows ignore existing

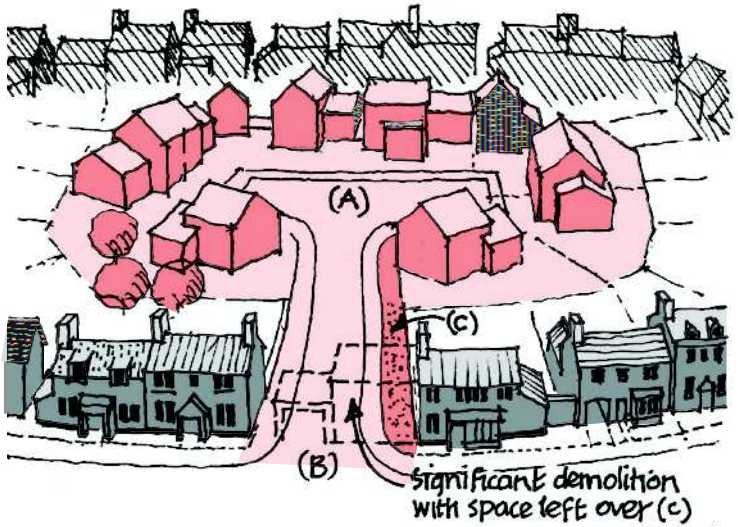


BACKLAND INFILL (Town or Village)

YARD or MEWS APPROACH

- Sense of enclosure with connected buildings, with building (A) terminating entrance vista.
- Building proportions & massing relate to context
- Shared space determined by vehicle tracking
- Access way & junction appropriate to usage & context

SUBURBAN-TYPE APPROACH



- 'Boxy' detatched house types inappropriate to context
- Limited sense of enclosure at (A) & (B)
- Space (A) determined by & dominated by standard turning head & pavements
- Oversize standard road junction with street. (B)

5.7 Privacy and sociability

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5.8 Storage for bicycles and recycling

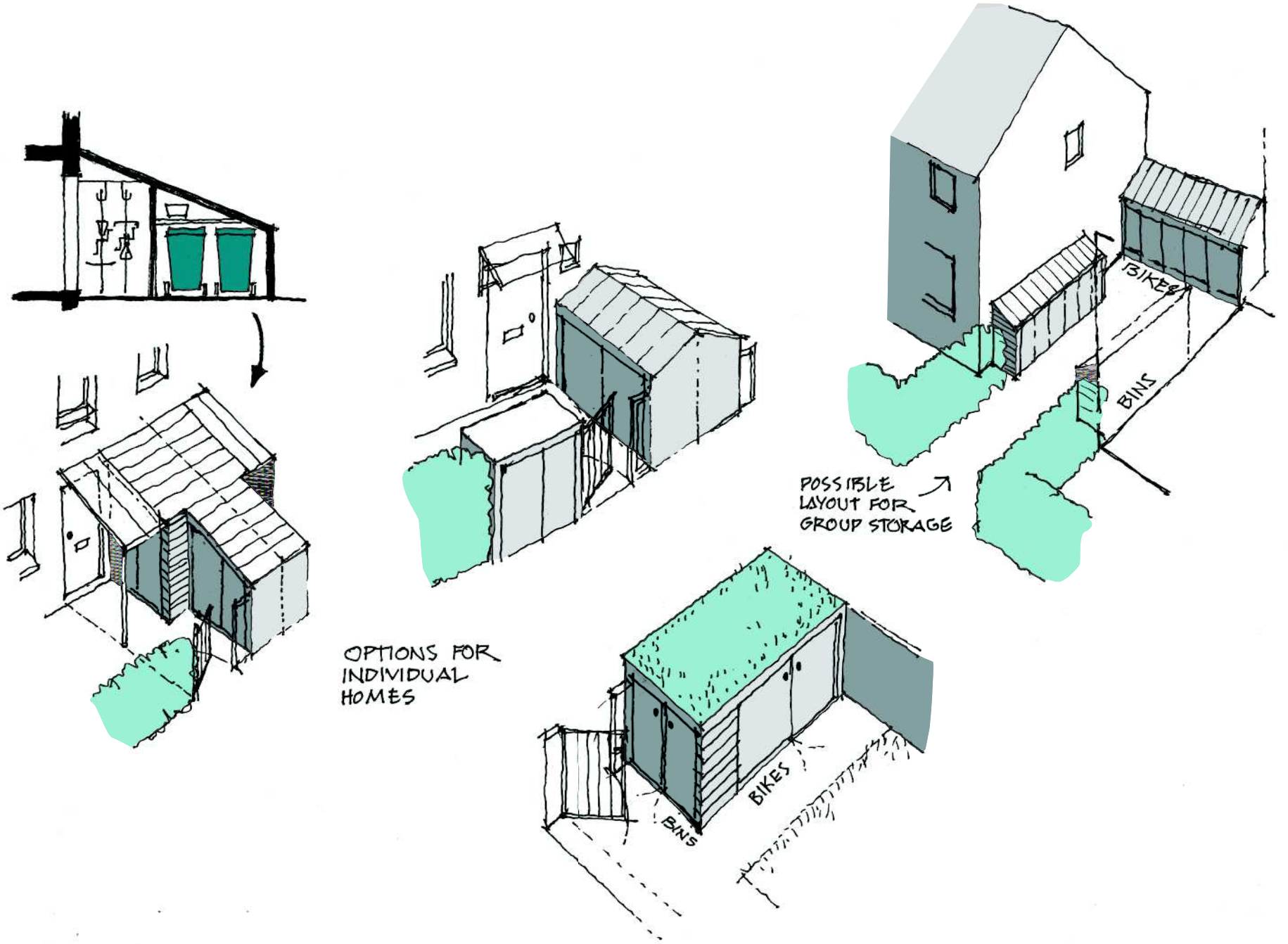
Bicycles and recycling bins are bulky items and if not considered in the initial stages of house design, either for individual houses or in groups, 'off the peg' retrofitted solutions are often visually intrusive, inconvenient or have a short design life.

As cycling is one of the preferred options for active travel, then bikes should be stored where they can easily be accessed, which usually means near the front door, preferably in the front garden or front boundary area. Similarly bins and recycling boxes should be located for ease of access at collection times and within the curtilage, to avoid cluttering pavements, creating hazards for pedestrians and wheelchair users.

Where garages are provided, they should be wide enough to accommodate bicycles and bins, without having to move a car.

As an alternative to on-plot storage, bike and bin storage accommodation for small groups of houses should be considered. It is likely that the store structure should serve no more than 8 units, in order that it is a convenient distance from all the units and in order that the structure does not become too large or bulky. Additionally, the small number of households served means that those using the facility become known to each other, reinforcing a sense of responsibility and security. Lighting and passive surveillance of the area should be design factors.

Overall, the aim should be to integrate this storage within the design of house types and/or smaller groups of housing. The diagrams suggest some design approaches.


OPTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL HOMES
POSSIBLE LAYOUT FOR GROUP STORAGE
BIKES
BINS
BIKES
BINS

5.9 Residential alterations and extensions

Most residential alterations and extensions (except Listed Buildings and houses in Conservation Areas) are deemed to be Permitted Development, if they are below X m long and Y m high. However, there are useful design principles which can both retain and enhance the character of the original building, (therefore retaining or enhancing its value), ensure good daylighting and reduce harmful impacts on neighbouring properties.

Design Considerations

Context

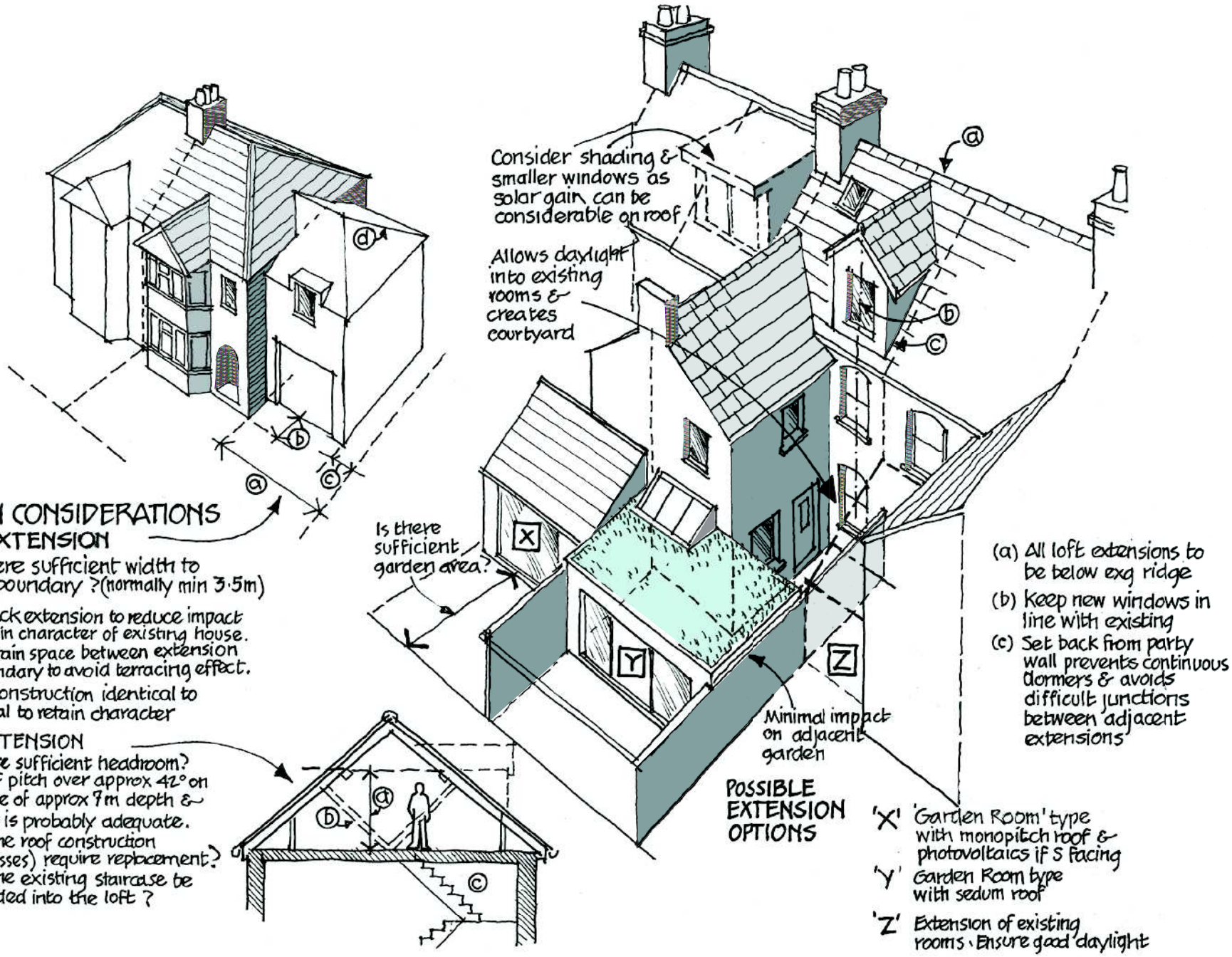
Assess the character of your house, its neighbours and the street.

- Is the house frontage symmetrical in design? Would an addition on the side or projecting in front of the street elevation 'unbalance' the character or the appearance?
- Are the original windows vertical in appearance? In which case would one or more square or horizontally proportioned windows damage the overall appearance of the house design?
- Are the materials and decorative details of the house design likely to be damaged or lost as a result of proposed alterations and extensions? Are uPVC replacement windows successful in replicating the design and proportion of the originals? Given this and the toxins which can be released if they catch fire, are other alternatives likely to be more successful?
- Looking at the street as a whole, what are the original features of the street which give it its positive character? For instance, is it the front garden boundary walls and/or the hedges and trees? Is it the unity or the slight variation in the design of the elevations? (what are the common features?). Do the houses have spaces between them, and would it harm the character of the area if al the houses became continuous in appearance due to the proliferation of side extensions? Is the roofline and roof profile of the street important? Would the insertion of rooflights or the raising of the crest of the roof be harmful?

Capacity

Assess the physical area and volume of your house.

- Is the existing roof pitch likely to provide sufficient headroom, (approximately 2.2m is probably an acceptable minimum) for a loft extension? See diagram on following page.
- Will the existing staircase arrangement and location enable convenient extension into the roofspace?
- Would a rear extension retain sufficient garden space and ensure adequate daylighting into the existing rooms?
- Would the extension design cause problems for adjacent properties in terms of overshadowing and loss of visual privacy?
- Can the extension and alteration design improve the carbon footprint of the house? For example, could a sedum-type roof replace any loss of lawn and CO2 absorption? Will any roof or ground floor extension significantly improve insulation?


DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS
SIDE EXTENSION
@ Is there sufficient width to side boundary ?(normally min 3·5m)
ⓑ set back extension to reduce impact & retain character of existing house.
© Maintain space between extension & boundary to avoid terracing effect.
@ Roof construction identical to original to retain character
LOFT EXTENSION
@ Is there sufficient headroom? (a roof pitch over approx 42° on a house of approx 7m depth & above is probably adequate.
ⓑ Will the roof construction (eg trusses) require replacement?
© Can the existing staircase be extended into the loft ?
Consider shading & smaller windows as solar gain can be considerable on roof
Allows daylight into existing rooms & creates courtyard
Is there sufficient garden area?
Minimal impact on adjacent garden
POSSIBLE EXTENSION OPTIONS
'X' 'Garden Room' type with monopitch roof & photovoltaics if S facing
'Y' Garden Room type with sedum roof
'Z' Extension of existing rooms . Ensure good daylight
(a) All loft extensions to be below exg ridge
(b) Keep new windows in line with existing
(c) Set back from party wall prevents continuous dormers & avoids difficult junctions between adjacent extensions

5.10 Shopfront design

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5.11 Property boundaries and streetscene

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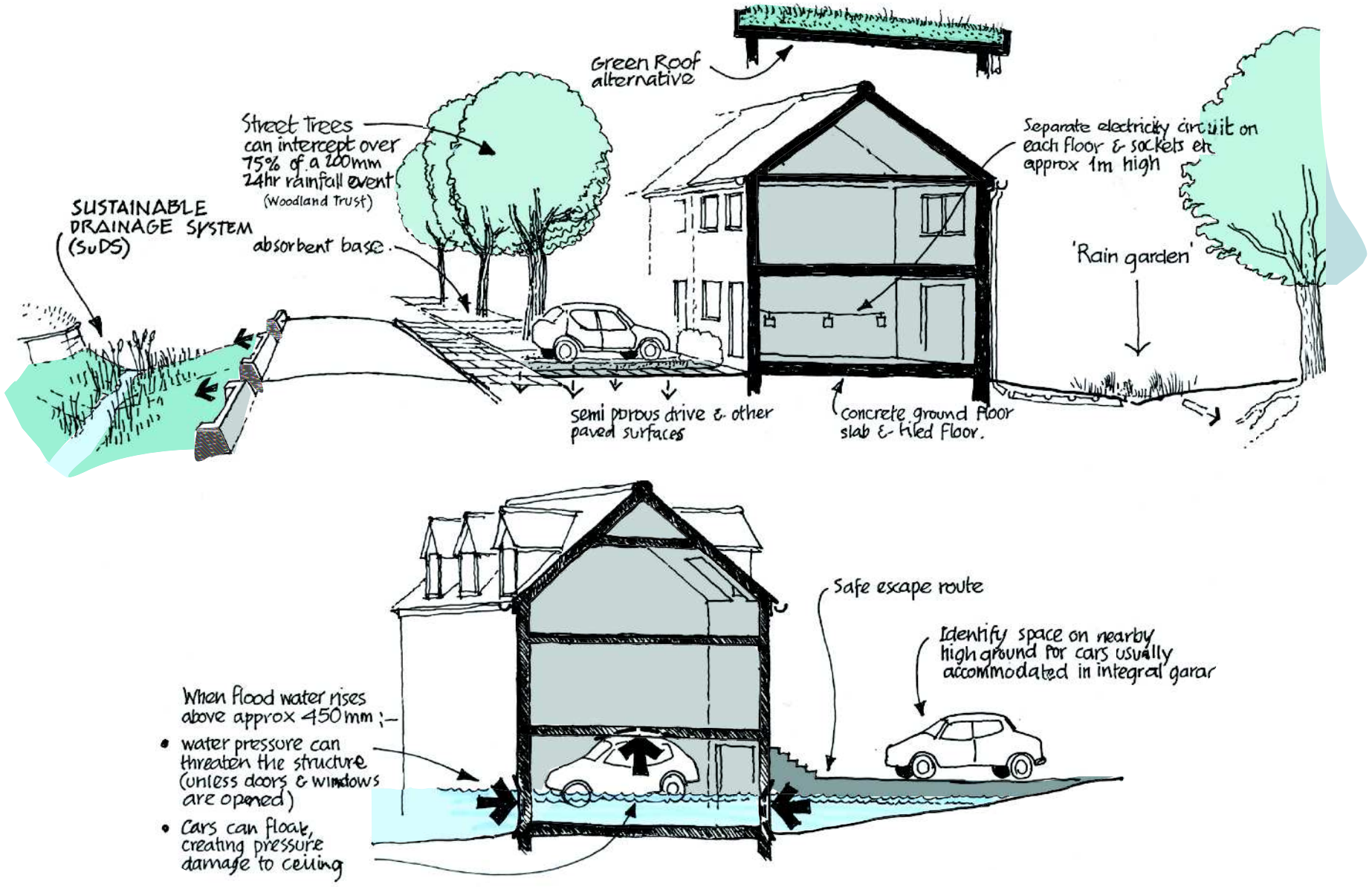
Fig.1: Hedgerow boundaries in new street development, Churchinford

Fig.2

5.12 Flood resilience



5.13 Heritage and community assets

5.13.1 Introduction

The historic environment is central to the district's cultural heritage and sense of identity, and hence a resource that should be sustained for the benefit of present and future generations. This section of the design guide is intended to enable a sensible decision-making on all aspects of the historic environment.

Interventions into historic buildings and areas are often required to ensure they remain fit for purpose or can be adapted to new uses. The need to improve building performance can also lead to the need for changes to your building. Interventions might also be required to respond to changes in building legislation or for the purposes of conservation, for example in the reinstatement of missing features or the reversal of harmful alterations. Where changes are planned, the significance of an asset should be maintained or enhanced.

Sustaining heritage values is likely to contribute to environmental sustainability, not least because much of the historic environment was designed for a comparatively low-energy economy. Traditional landscape management patterns of Somerset West and Taunton have been sustained over centuries. Many traditional buildings and building materials are durable and perform well in terms of the energy needed to make and use them. Their removal and replacement would require a major reinvestment of energy and resources.

5.13.2 What is a heritage asset?

The difference between a heritage asset and other components of the environment is that a heritage asset holds meaning for society over and above its functional utility. It is this heritage significance that justifies a degree of protection in planning decisions.

There are a number of different types of heritage asset. These will often be referred to as designated or undesignated heritage assets. These are as follows:
(numbers and examples to follow)

- Scheduled Monuments
- Listed Buildings
- Conservation Areas
- Registered Park and Garden (and battlefields)

Scheduled Monuments are nationally important due to their historic, architectural, artistic, traditional or archaeological interest. They are desginated by central government on the advice of Historic England.

A Listed building is graded I, II* or II. Buildings are 'listed' by central government on the advice of Historic England. The basic criterion for listing a building is that it must hold special historic or architectural interest. The 'listing' of a building means that it is recorded on the National Heritage List for England. It means there will be additional controls over what changes can be made to a building's interior and exterior. Owners will need to apply for Listed Building Consent for most types of work that affect the 'special architectural or historic interest' of their home. Listing can also cover other attached structures and fixtures, later extensions or additions and buildings built before 1948 on land attached to the building, what is called in planning terms, the curtilage.

Conservation areas are designated by the Council. The definition of a conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest the desirability of which is to preserve or enhance that special character or appearance.

Parks and gardens and battlefields may be registered if they are of special historic interest. All of these criteria have two components: the nature of the interest or significance that defines the designation and the relative importance locally and nationally of that interest or significance.

In addition to the national and statutory designations (see above), Somerset West and Taunton has formally identified heritage assets that are important to the area. These buildings are of local interest and may be considered as non-designated heritage assets.

5.13.3 Understanding of heritage assets

The conservation of heritage assets requires judgement based on an understanding of principles informed by experience and knowledge to be exercised when decisions are made.

Good conservation depends on a sound research evidence base and the use of competent advisors and contractors.

Understanding character and place on its very many levels, including the recognition of local distinctiveness, and its potential and capacity for change, is crucial in order to successfully propose interventions which will not harm the character and local distinctiveness of a place.

5.13.4 Setting

Setting refers to the surroundings in which an asset is experienced. All heritage assets have a setting; elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance, or may be neutral.

Change, including development, can sustain, enhance or better reveal the significance of an asset as well as detract from it or leave it unaltered. Any development or change capable of affecting the significance of a heritage asset or people's experience of it can be considered as falling within its setting.

5.13.5 The use of materials

The correct choice of materials for building work is especially important for historic buildings. Where possible, existing materials should be investigated and tested so that good performance and aesthetic matches can be achieved. In cases where the existing material source is not available, re-use of suitable materials from salvage might give better results than newly formed materials. However, sources should be verified to ensure this does not cause degradation of other historic buildings and to ensure that repairs are identifiable.

The use of materials is important to the character of a place. We must guard against the use of poorly detailed, 'watered-down' versions of the local vernacular and a general 'cherry-picking' of local details; a stone facade (often the type of stone and cut finish do not reflect local tradition), the use of thatch (often the wrong type and finish) or the use of false plastic chimneys (moulded to mimic brick).

In many cases complementary but contrasting materials can be more effective in relating to original materials than poorly/inappropriately matched ones (Fig. X).

IMAGE TO FOLLOW

Types of intervention

5.13.6 Repair

Materials and construction methods embodied in historic building's fabric illustrate changes in people's ideas, tastes, skills and the relationship with their locality. Historic materials hold an attraction and character in and of themselves; the surfaces, blemishes and undulations of old buildings speak of the passage of time and of lives lived. Wear and tear adds patination that new work can only acquire through the slow process of ageing. This is particularly true of the materials which make West Somerset and Taunton so locally distinctive.

A careful choice of materials is essential to the sympathetic and effective repair of old buildings. Often it is best for new materials to match the old, ensuring materials remain compatible in terms of structural movement and/or 'breathability'. Sometimes though, use of alternative materials may be more fitting and effective, allowing new work to be distinguished from the old, and illustrating that an intervention has occurred. Equally, use of alternative materials can sometimes assist the maximum retention of historic materials in a building project **(Fig 1 – Fig 2)**.

5.13.7 Alteration

New work or alteration to a heritage asset should normally be acceptable if:

a. there is sufficient information to comprehensively understand the impacts of the proposal on the significance of the place;

b. the proposal would not materially harm the values of the place, which, where appropriate, would be reinforced or further revealed and;

c. the proposals aspire to a quality of design and execution which may be valued now and in the future and are commensurate with the design quality of the host building

Alterations should be carried out only if there is no suitable alternative option. They should be designed to minimize their impact on the significance of the historic building, and should avoid losing features that contribute to that significance.

The principle of reversibility should be used, for example, new insertions, such as sub-dividing walls, should be contoured around original features and mouldings so they can be removed in the future, leaving the original fabric intact.

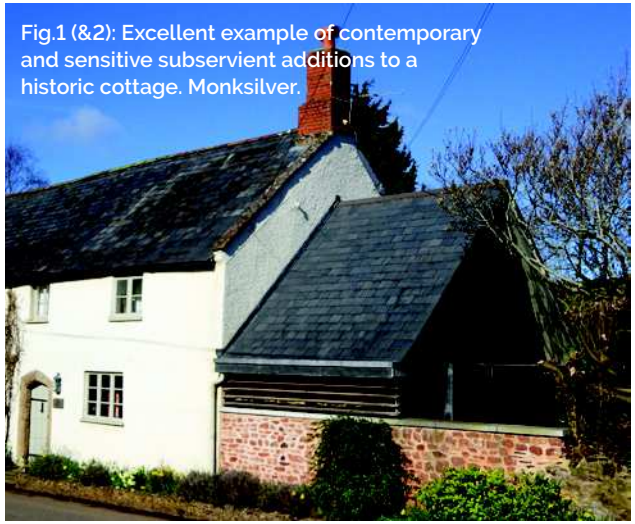


Fig.1 (&2): Excellent example of contemporary and sensitive subservient additions to a historic cottage. Monksilver.

Fig. 2

The main issues to consider in proposals for additions to heritage assets, including new development in conservation areas, in addition to careful consideration of national and local plan policy requirements, are proportion, height, massing, bulk, use of materials, durability and adaptability, use, enclosure, relationship with adjacent assets and definition of spaces. In addition you should consider the design of streets, alignments, active frontages, permeability and the treatment of setting. Replicating a particular style may be less important, though there are circumstances when it may be appropriate. It would not normally be acceptable for new work to dominate the original asset or its setting in either scale, material or as a result of its siting. Assessment of an asset's significance and its relationship to its setting will usually suggest the forms of extension that might be appropriate.

The historic fabric will always be an important part of the asset's significance. Retention of as much historic fabric as possible is therefore a fundamental part of any good alteration or conversion, together with the use of appropriate materials and methods of repair. It is not appropriate to sacrifice old work simply to accommodate the new.

5.13.8 Old and new work

Where possible it is preferable for new work to be reversible, so that changes can be undone without harm to historic fabric. However, reversibility alone does not justify alteration. New openings need to be considered in the context of the architectural and historic significance of that part of the asset. Where new work or additions make elements with significance redundant, such as doors or decorative features, there is likely to be less impact on the asset's aesthetic, historic or evidential value if they are left in place.

IMAGE TO FOLLOW

5.13.9 Plan form of a building

The plan form of a listed building is frequently one of its most important characteristics and internal partitions, staircases (whether decorated or plain, principal or secondary) and other features are likely to form part of its significance. Proposals to remove or modify internal arrangements, including the insertion of new openings or extension underground, will be subject to the same considerations of impact on significance (particularly architectural interest) as for externally visible alterations.

5.13.10 Sub-division

The sub-division of listed buildings, such as threshing barns and churches, that are significant for their open interiors, impressive proportions and long sight lines, may have a considerable impact on significance. In these circumstances the use of living pods (for kitchens and bathrooms for example) or other design devices (such as sympathetic extensions) that allow the entirety of the space to be read may be appropriate.

The introduction of new floors into a building or removal of historic floors and ceilings may have a considerable impact on an asset's significance. The insertion of new elements such as doors and windows, (including dormers and roof lights to bring roof spaces into use) has the potential to adversely affect the building's significance. In some circumstances the unbroken line of a roof may be an important contributor to its significance making any intervention problematic and contentious.

New features added to a building are less likely to have an impact on the significance if they follow the character of the building. In a barn conversion, for example, new doors and windows are more likely to be acceptable if they are agricultural rather than domestic in character, with the relationship of new glazing to the wall plane reflecting that of the existing and, where large door openings are to be glazed, with the former doors retained or replicated so that they can be closed. Over-use of opening windows and glazing bars in agricultural building conversions can be particularly problematic.

Although some works of up-grading, such as new kitchens and bathroom units, are unlikely to need consent, new services, both internal and external can have a considerable, and often cumulative, effect on the appearance of an historic building and can affect significance. The impact of necessary services can be minimised by avoiding damage to decorative features, by carefully routing and finishing and by use of materials appropriate to the relevant period, such as cast iron for gutters and down-pipes for many Georgian and Victorian buildings.

IMAGE TO COME

5.13.11 Historic shopfronts

Removal of, and change to, historic shopfronts may damage the significance of both the building **(Fig. 1 & 2)** and where relevant the wider conservation area, as may the introduction of new shopfronts to historic buildings where there are none at present. All elements of new shopfronts (stall-risers, glazing, doors, fascias etc.) may affect the significance of the building it is located in and the wider street setting. External steel roller shutters are unlikely to be suitable for historic or modern shopfronts in listed buildings or conservation areas. Laminated glass and internal chain-link screens are likely to be more appropriate alternatives in most instances.

5.13.12 Viable use

It is important that any use is viable, not just for the owner but also for the future conservation of the asset. Viable uses will fund future maintenance. If there is a range of alternative ways in which an asset could viably be used, the optimum use is the one that causes the least harm to the significance of the asset, not just through necessary initial changes but also as a result of subsequent wear and tear and likely future changes. The optimum viable use may not necessarily be the most profitable one in the short term but may have longer term value.

5.13.13 Archaeology

Sites, places and buildings having, or suspected of having, archaeological interest can be particularly sensitive to development. Sometimes even very minor works can irrevocably damage the interests of a future investigation of the site. In such cases the applicant and local planning authority will need to:

1. Properly understand the nature, relative importance and physical extent of the archaeological interest in these sites through a desk-based assessment (DBA), field evaluation, basic appraisal or recording of the asset, as required.
2. Consider proposed uses that are benign to the conservation of the asset's significance.
3. Seek to eradicate or minimise impact through design (for example, foundations that span sensitive areas rather than penetrate them). Please note, this can also extend to the landscaping of new areas, introducing new trees for example

Fig. 1 (& 2): Victorian shopfront saved intact from demolition in the 1970s, including its fine threshold, enhancing the character of the historic building.

Fig. 2

Additions or new buildings

5.13.14 General design considerations

Design in historic areas (as with any other area) should always seek to reflect its context as well as fulfil the basic requirements of its brief. Contextual analysis should be carried out so that a bespoke, site-specific design solution can be arrived at (see Section XX).

Where new development affects the context of historic buildings or involves their extension, analysis of the historic building should be undertaken. This would include the following:

a. the significance;

b. the style of the building, including any underlying design theories or principles;

c. scale, massing and composition;

d. features of interest;

e. materials and construction;

f. previous alterations, including an assessment of whether they enhanced or harmed the building's integrity; and

g. the relationship of the building to surrounding buildings and features.

New extensions should normally be subservient to the historic building in terms of scale, height and massing. New works should not obliterate or destroy features of interest in the historic building. It might be necessary for extensions to be attached by a smaller link section rather than directly to the original building.

The following checklist will help in determining whether your new building is responding positively to its context:

1. The significance of nearby assets and the contribution of their setting.
2. The general character and distinctiveness of the local buildings, spaces, public realm and the landscape.
3. Landmarks and other features that are key to a sense of place.
4. The diversity or uniformity in style, construction, materials, detailing, decoration and period of existing buildings and spaces.
5. The topography.
6. Views into and from the site and its surroundings.
7. Green landscaping.
8. The current and historic uses in the area and the urban grain.

Some or all of these factors may influence the scale, height, massing, alignment, materials and proposed use in any successful design.

IMAGE TO FOLLOW

Appendix

5.13.15 Additional information
An applicant will need to undertake an assessment of significance to an extent necessary to understand the potential impact (positive or negative) of the proposal and to a level of thoroughness proportionate to the relative importance of the asset whose fabric or setting is affected.

Engagement with the relevant local authority specialists can be particularly helpful in developing an understanding of significance and in identifying the level of information needed to support an application. It can also be helpful to consult national amenity societies and groups or individuals (such as local civic and historical societies) with relevant links to the site and it's past.

5.13.16 What information is required?
All applicants should provide a level of information that is proportionate to the significance of the asset and the potential impact upon that significance of the proposals. For example, for a substantial demolition it is reasonable to expect the applicant to provide detailed information on the asset as a whole and a thorough explanation of the impact. An application for a minor alteration to part of the asset is likely only to require detailed information on the affected part of the asset, along with a brief explanation of how the impacts relate to the significance of the asset as a whole.

5.13.17 The use of Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs)
The purpose of Heritage Impact Assessments is to gain an understanding of the effect of developments and changes on the historic asset, and how the impact of change might be mitigated. HIAs can be carried out at various levels of scale and complexity, from the effects of building works on a small structure to the effects of major development in a world heritage site.

HIAs should identify the significance of the element concerned on the relative scale of values, the nature of the proposed change, an assessment of whether the change needs to be mitigated and if so how this can be achieved. The mitigation measures should be justified on the basis of the heritage asset's significance.

IMAGE TO FOLLOW

5.13.18 Using appropriate expertise

Compliance with the policies of the Council requires expert advice to inform their decision-making where the need to understand the particular significance of a heritage asset and any proposed impact demands it. This may be from in-house experts, experts available through agreement with other authorities, or professional consultants. This advice may be complemented by advice from heritage amenity societies, including the National Amenity Societies.

5.13.19 Recording of buildings

The compilation of any but the most cursory building record requires a significant commitment of time. No recording should be undertaken, therefore, without first establishing whether relevant information already exists and assessing its merits. An appropriate form and level of recording will build upon existing knowledge and will be shaped both by the nature and perceived significance of the building and by the circumstances prevailing at the time, including the intended purpose of the record and the needs of its likely users. A clear understanding of these issues will help to determine the format in which the resulting information is presented and will also enable an estimate to be made at the outset of the resources needed to carry out the work.

Most records will incorporate some form of written description and analysis, drawing on either an investigation of the building's fabric, or research in documentary sources, or both. They will also typically include a visual record made by photography and/or drawing. However, the time devoted to each activity, and consequently the content of the record, will vary considerably according to the nature of the building and the circumstances of the recording project.

IMAGE TO FOLLOW

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6.0 SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

6.1 Information required for making a Planning Application

This information to be supplied
by the Planning Authority

6.2 Design and Access Statements

6.2.1. What are they and why are they required?
Design and Access Statements (DAS) are concise documents prepared by applicants to accompany all but the most minor planning applications and in particular major projects, and/or those that are likely to have significant impact or which are located in sensitive contexts. They provide the applicant with the opportunity to explain the reasoning behind the design approach taken and the designer's response to the local context. These Statements are useful to planning officers in providing additional information to the application drawings for their understanding and assessment of a scheme. Similarly, they can be helpful for councillors, neighbours and the community to appreciate the reasoning behind the drawings, which otherwise may prove difficult to understand.

The 'Access' part of the title refers primarily to the importance attached to ensuring that development proposals will be equally accessible to all users, residents and visitors, regardless of age, ability, or gender. Access can also be taken to mean the ease to which the scheme can be approached, by active travel, vehicular access and for deliveries and servicing.

6.2.2. What is the scope and content of a Design and Access Statement?
The DAS should be written both as the 'narrative' of the evolution of the scheme and as a description of the final proposals. It is suggested that the Design Process section of this Guide Section 2.0 could provide the structure for most of the DAS. For example;

a. Preliminaries.
The developer's brief; the use and size of the proposals. Reasons for the proposals and analysis of local need or demand. The choice of site. Response to likely impacts. Conclusions drawn from appraisal of relevant policies. The influences on the proposals as a result of meetings with planners and other agencies and the outcome of engagement with the local community.

b. Appraisal of the context of the development. (annotated map and illustrations with text) Assessment of the landscape and /or townscape setting of the site; Long views to and from the site, including key ridgelines and rooflines; topography. Setting of heritage assets; connections (existing or potential) between the site and local facilities. The character of the built environment context (Building types, densities, forms, massing, grain and scale, materials palette, distinctive features and styles), character areas; types of green spaces trees and hedges and public realm; landmarks and other features valued by the local community. Pattern and scale of predominant uses (existing, trends and past). Map regression showing the evolution of the site and its context.

c. Appraisal of the site of the development. (annotated map and illustrations, with text). Topography of the site; drainage and areas of flood risk. Areas of exposure, shelter and orientation to the sun. Areas of contamination and other sub-surface constraints, including archaeology. Hedgerows, trees and other vegetation; condition, habitats and biodiversity. Structures on site and potential for re-use. Boundaries:- condition, character and sensitivity (eg privacy/overlooking). Existing and potential access points. Areas of the site within the setting of heritage assets.

d. The development of the design concept.
Series of diagrammatic sketch plans demonstrating how the requirements of the brief, outcome of engagement and key factors of the appraisal of context and site coalesce into design options. These plans typically would show the broad character of the development (relative density ranges; formal/informal, general layout and main frontages, character areas and key groups, green infrastructure. These may be supplemented by 3D visualisations or the use of (valid) examples of similar developments.
At this stage it is advisable to engage with all stakeholders and perhaps design review.

e. Description of the proposals.
A more detailed set of plans, elevations and visualisations of the preferred option, short of the full application information.

It is stressed that the DAS should be as concise as appropriate to cover the points raised above. It should be written in an accessible style and wherever possible should have a high illustrative/ graphic content.

6.3 Masterplans, Parameter Plans and Design Coding

Taunton Garden Town information

6.3.1 What are masterplans?

a. Masterplans set the vision and implementation strategy for a development. They are distinct from local design guides by focusing on site specific proposals such as the scale and layout of development, mix of uses, transport and green infrastructure. Depending on the level of detail, the masterplan may indicate the intended arrangement of buildings, streets and the public realm. More specific parameters for the site's development should be set out in separate Parameter Plans and/or a Design Code which can accompany the overall Masterplan.

b. A range of other plans and technical reports may be needed alongside a masterplan, to provide supporting evidence and set out related proposals, such as a local character study, landscape assessment, transport assessment and proposals for securing biodiversity net gain. An implementation strategy could also be included, especially where development is expected to be brought forward in a number of phases.

6.3.2 How can masterplans be used most effectively?

a. Masterplans are most likely to be produced by local authorities or developers and should be based on the principles as set out in this Design Guide. For local authorities, they can help to clarify design expectations early in the planning process, set a clear vision for the site, inform infrastructure and viability assessments and identify requirements for developer contributions or other investment. Developers may produce a masterplan to help assess options and evolve their own vision, in support of an outline planning application for a site, but the scope and content should be agreed with the local planning authority and in wider engagement with the community in pre-application discussions.

b. Whoever prepares them, masterplans can benefit from a collaborative approach between the local planning authority, site promoters and local communities so that aspirations and constraints are understood early on. Masterplans produced by local planning authorities may be adopted as supplementary planning documents to give them weight in decisions on applications. Masterplans often apply to schemes that are developed over a long time period and so may need to be subject to regular review and be flexible to adapt to changing circumstances.

c. Care should be taken to ensure that masterplans are viable and well understood by all involved and that graphic representations of what the development will look like do not mislead the public by showing inaccurate details or significant elements not yet decided upon.

6.3.3 What is the role of parameter plans in achieving well-designed places?

a. Parameter plans can include information on the proposed land use, building heights, areas of potential built development, structure of landscape and green infrastructure, access and movement and other key structuring and placemaking components. They can be prepared to inform an environmental impact assessment, where one is required to accompany an outline application.

b. Parameter plans can provide elements of the framework within which more detailed design proposals are generated, but they are not a substitute for a clear design concept and masterplan, and need to be used in a way that does not inhibit the evolution of detailed proposals. For example, setting maximum parameters for aspects such as building heights can still allow flexibility in determining the detailed design of a scheme.

c. The Parameter Plan which confirms the key structuring and placemaking components (an 'Urban Design Framework') is an essential link between the Masterplan and any subsequent Design Codes. The Design Codes can then be clearly constructed to deliver these place-making ideas.

6.3.4 What are design codes?

a. Design Codes are a set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. The graphic and written components of the code should be proportionate and build upon a design concept, such as a masterplan or other design and development framework for a site or area. Their content should also be informed by this local Design Guide and the 10 characteristics of good places set out in the National Design Guide. One of their most important roles is to ensure that the Urban Design Framework for the project is implemented. In this way, codes help to maintain quality by identifying the elements of a Masterplan that are fundamental in creating a sense of place, and translating these into a set of detailed design instructions.

b. Design Codes can be commissioned or prepared by either the local planning authority or developer, but are best prepared in partnership to secure agreed design outcomes and maintain viability, particularly across complex sites and phased and multi-developer schemes. They can also be prepared for smaller sites, including self-build or custom build projects, where codes can be used to maintain a degree of certainty whilst allowing for design freedom. On large sites it can be important to allow for the code to be reviewed as development proceeds, so that lessons from its initial implementation can be addressed, provided that any changes do not subvert the overall design concept or weaken the quality of development.

c. Design Codes can be applied to all development types including residential, commercial, mixed use, open space, landscape or public realm requirements. They can be adopted as a supplementary planning document, or appended to a Neighbourhood Plan, Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development order.

d. Before attempting to construct a Code then a clear brief should be established and agreed which identifies the specific design issues that the Code will deal with. A generic Code that merely confirms that normal development practice will be acceptable is clearly unlikely to raise design quality. The content of Codes should vary according to context and be specifically constructed for each project to create a coherent sense of place.

e. Design Codes can include some associated guidance to be applied in a discretionary manner, but the central core of the Code should be a set of mandatory rules set out and described in unambiguous illustrations and language. These will directly inform the preparation of Reserved Matters applications and should provide an 'easy to use' framework for use by development management officers when assessing those submissions. A well-constructed Code will maintain essential principles but allow for an appropriate level of variety and flexibility in those aspects of the design which are not critical in achieving the place-making aims.

f. A Regulating Plan that assigns the various rules to the different parts of the Masterplan layout, showing where they apply, will be a key drawing within the Code. It should serve to coordinate the accumulated design intentions provided by those individual rules and therefore act as the first and main point of reference for those using the document.

6.4. Checklist for Heritage Statements

A Heritage Statement is a document which will form part of applications for planning permission

and/or Listed Building Consent (LBC) and should provide the justification for the changes proposed to the heritage asset.

Statements will define the heritage assets affected and provide analysis of the significance of these heritage assets and how (if at all) the significance will be affected. The Heritage Statement should provide justification for the changes proposed

What should Heritage Statements include?

- ☑ Heritage Statements should identify and define the extent and the significance of the asset and its setting.
- ☑ The document should be detailed enough that the impact of the proposals on significance and setting can be properly assessed by the Local Planning Authority (LPA). It is important that statements are a balanced; evidence-based assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed development, and should not simply express a personal view on whether the works should be approved.
- ☑ The minimum requirement will be the consultation of the Somerset Historic Environment Record (HER) for information on the history of the building, site or area as well as (where the building is listed) the National Heritage List produced by Historic England.
- ☑ Sources such as historic maps, deeds, photographs, plans etc are available to help inform heritage statements and to enable the understanding of significance and the degree of change which has taken place over time.
- ☑ The Somerset HER is likely to be the principal source of information about the historic environment for the district

PLEASE NOTE: Applications for permission or consent may not be validated or processed unless the necessary heritage statement has been submitted

- ☑ You may wish to consider the specialist input by an appropriate professional. This will often be required. This could be an historic buildings specialist, archaeologist or conservation architect to properly assess the heritage asset and its significance.
- ☑ Other information may inform or be needed to understand the potential impact upon heritage assets, such as the proposed schedule (specification) of works and/or structural surveys.
- ☑ In respect of archaeological sites an archaeological desk-based assessment or archaeological survey/evaluation may be required in the form of professional research and investigation, such as geophysical survey or necessary archaeological evaluation via trial trenching.

The following headings should be used as a guide to the contents of a heritage statement:

Introduction

- ☑ defining the heritage assets; location and any designations (for examples listed building?
- ☑ include the list description, conservation area? Name and date of designation, is there a conservation area appraisal – is the building/ site mentioned discussed?

Historic context

- ☑ to include map regression, historic associations, documentary evidence

Description

- ☑ description of the site and its setting

Discussion

- ☑ objective (avoid value-laden statements) understanding of the changes which have taken place to the site over time
- ☑ include any information which is useful to the understanding of the building/site

Significance of the Asset

- ☑ A summary statement defining the significance of the asset (culmination of the headings above)

Proposed changes and impact

- ☑ Describe the changes and what impact (if any) they will have on the significance (as defined)
- ☑ Identify any mitigation (how can the impact be minimised/avoided) is the work reversible for example, is recording of the building required?

Conclusion

- ☑ Brief summary of proposals, their impact and possible mitigation

6.5 Design Review

6.5.1 What is design review and how can it be used appropriately?

Design review is an independent assessment of development proposals by a panel of multidisciplinary professionals and experts, which can inform and improve design quality in new development. It is not intended to replace advice from statutory consultees and advisory bodies, or be a substitute for local authority design skills or community engagement.

Effective design review is proportionate and can be used for both large and small-scale development, so long as the projects are significant enough to warrant the investment needed for a review. The number and expertise of panel members required can be guided by the complexity of the scheme and the sensitivity of the site and its surroundings.

6.5.2 An effective design review:

- follows clear criteria for the appraisal of schemes, agreed by the panel, and ensuring they work for the benefit of the public and reflect relevant local and national design objectives;
- sets clear, meaningful terms of reference to ensure a transparent, objective, robust and defensible process that demonstrates benefit to the public;
- is representative, diverse and inclusive, drawing upon a range of built environment and other professional expertise. Continuity of panel members is important to provide consistency in approach for each scheme reviewed, including agreed procedures to feedback to applicants;
- considers the wider site-specific and policy context, such as relevant socio-economic issues, as well as the physical characteristics of the site and its setting. Site visits are important in providing panel members with awareness of context and local characteristics;
- is written up and communicated in a transparent and accessible way to be understood by a wide range of stakeholders; and
- includes feedback mechanisms to allow the views of its users, local communities and other stakeholders to be reflected in the general operational principles and governance of the service.

Design review is most effective when applied at the earliest stage of design development. It can be followed up at further stages as projects evolve, including pre-application and are implemented, referencing and building upon recommendations made in previous design reviews.

For major projects a first review should be anticipated soon-after the development of the Design Concept, with a second review arranged well in advance of the submission of the master-planning and design work associated with an Outline Planning submission. Further reviews, as the Detailed or Reserved Matters information begins to be prepared, can be expected. These will depend on the specific circumstances of each project, but certainly where either design codes and/or neighbourhood masterplans with project-specific design guidance is called for by a planning condition, then the preparation stage of these should be informed by the timely guidance and scrutiny of a design review panel.

6.5.3 What is the Design Review procedure?

Different Panels will have their own format, which is usually set out when applicants are invited to participate. However, it is likely that the following will take place.

The review session normally takes between 1.5 and 2 hours. Following introductions, either the Development Management case officer will outline briefly the points which the Local Authority would like the panel to address, after which the team will give their presentation, or the team will be asked to start with their presentation. The presentation will usually be between 20 to 30 minutes, delivered as a powerpoint or an exhibit of drawings, or both. It is advisable to structure the presentation as a series of headline topics (possibly using the Design Process as outlined in this Guide) and perhaps ending with points which the team would like to discuss.

Following the presentation, there will be a discussion with the panel, to explore the design thinking and raise points which the panel may wish the team to consider. The discussion is an inquiry with peers, not an interrogation.

At the end of the discussion session, which could last up to an hour, the team will be asked to withdraw for a few minutes while the panel chair ascertains the initial collective view of the panel. The team is usually invited back for a few minutes in order that the panel chair can give the panel's initial feedback, after which the session ends. The chair will state when the formal decision letter will be sent, (usually by 10-14 days), following the detailed consultation with the panel. A copy of the decision letter is sent to the local authority.

Recommendations from design review panels will be used to help support decisions on applications, so development proposals need to show how they have considered and addressed them.

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7.0 APPENDICES

7.1 Glossary

(Definitions being drafted. Suggestions invited for additional terms)

Active Frontage/s.

Density.

Enclosure.

Green Infrastructure.

Hierarchy.

Key Group/Building.

Massing.

Perimeter Block.

Place.

Placemaking.

Rain Garden.

Scale.

Shared Space.

Street Scene.

Terminating Building.

Townscape.

Tracking.

Typology.

7.2 References

In preparation – Copy to follow

7.3 Contacts

In preparation – Copy to follow

Somerset West and Taunton