

Rural Design Guide / Monaghan

CLIENT/MONAGHAN COUNTY COUNCIL
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MARY KERRIGAN
ARCHITECT

COLIN
BUCHANAN

FOREWORD

STATUS OF THE GUIDE

This guide has been prepared in accordance with Policy RD1 of the Draft County Development Plan – Policy of the Council to prepare and implement a Design Guide for Rural Housing in County Monaghan. Whilst non-statutory, the guide is a supplementary document which should be read in conjunction with the policies controlling development as set out in the County Development Plan. The guide will advise on design issues and assist applicants wishing to gain planning permission for new homes by highlighting the key issues that should be addressed at an early stage in the house design process.







table of CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Purpose of the Guide
- 1.2 How to use this Guide
- 1.3 The Design Process

2. THE SIGNATURE OF MONAGHAN

- 2.1 Character & Context
- 2.2 The Rural Landscape
- 2.3 Building Typology
- 2.4 Settlement Patterns
- 2.5 Materials/Colour
- 2.6 Potential of Re-using Existing Buildings

3. WHAT TO CONSIDER FIRST

- 3.1 Analysis of Requirements
- 3.2 Appraising the Setting
- 3.3 Appraising the Site
- 3.4 Develop a Design Concept

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Shape
- 4.2 Size & Scale
- 4.3 Simplicity
- 4.4 Height
- 4.5 Proportion
- 4.6 Energy/sustainability
- 4.7 Sloping Sites
- 4.8 Houses adjacent to other dwellings

5. BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

- 5.1 Worked Example
- 5.2 Making a Planning Application





INTRODUCTION...

1. INTRODUCTION...

- 1.1 Purpose of the Guide
- 1.2 How to use this Guide
- 1.3 The Design Process

INTRODUCTION

1.1 purpose of the GUIDE

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

This guide aims to improve the design quality of new rural dwellings throughout the county. The guide will also seek to achieve a better understanding of what constitutes a sensitive approach to siting new houses well in the countryside.

The guide aims to assist applicants to obtain planning permission for those proposing to build new dwellings or re-use existing properties in the countryside.

The Guide also explores some of the challenges of building sustainably in rural Monaghan.

The guide will make clear the Council's requirements when planning applications are made. It will explain how choices about the site and the design of a dwelling can determine the success of a planning application, and indeed the completed project.

OBJECTIVES:

- To improve the design quality of new dwellings in the countryside.
- To ensure all new dwellings are integrated with the landscape and minimise their impact on the surrounding environment.
- To encourage new dwellings in the countryside that draw on the key patterns in Co Monaghan's traditional domestic rural architecture, whilst still reflecting contemporary design.
- To explain and encourage the implementation of principles of sustainable development and design in rural housing.
- To guide applicants through the planning & design process



HENCHION REUTER
ARCHITECTS





HENCHION REUTER ARCHITECTS



FRANK O'MAHONY ARCHITECTS



PAUL KEOGH ARCHITECTS



1.2 how to use this GUIDE

Part 1 provides information on the purpose and aims of the Design Guide and how the guide is to be used.

Part 2 examines the nature of the character and cultural context of County Monaghan. This section will summarise the main characteristics of the landscape and built environment in County Monaghan. Every design decision should be informed by context so it is important to establish what elements form the predominant character or signature of a place. As well as looking at landscape, traditional building types and settlement forms, economic, social and cultural factors are also examined vis-a-vis their direct and indirect impact on rural design in the County.

Part 3 explores what might need to be accommodated in a new house and provides guidance on things to look out for when shopping for a site. The section concludes by illustrating the principles of good site layout.

Part 4 moves on to more detailed guidance on architectural design, materials, detailing and colour. Various building elements (windows, roofs, doors etc...) are also considered in the context of elevation design. Guidance is provided for inserting a new house close to an existing small grouping.

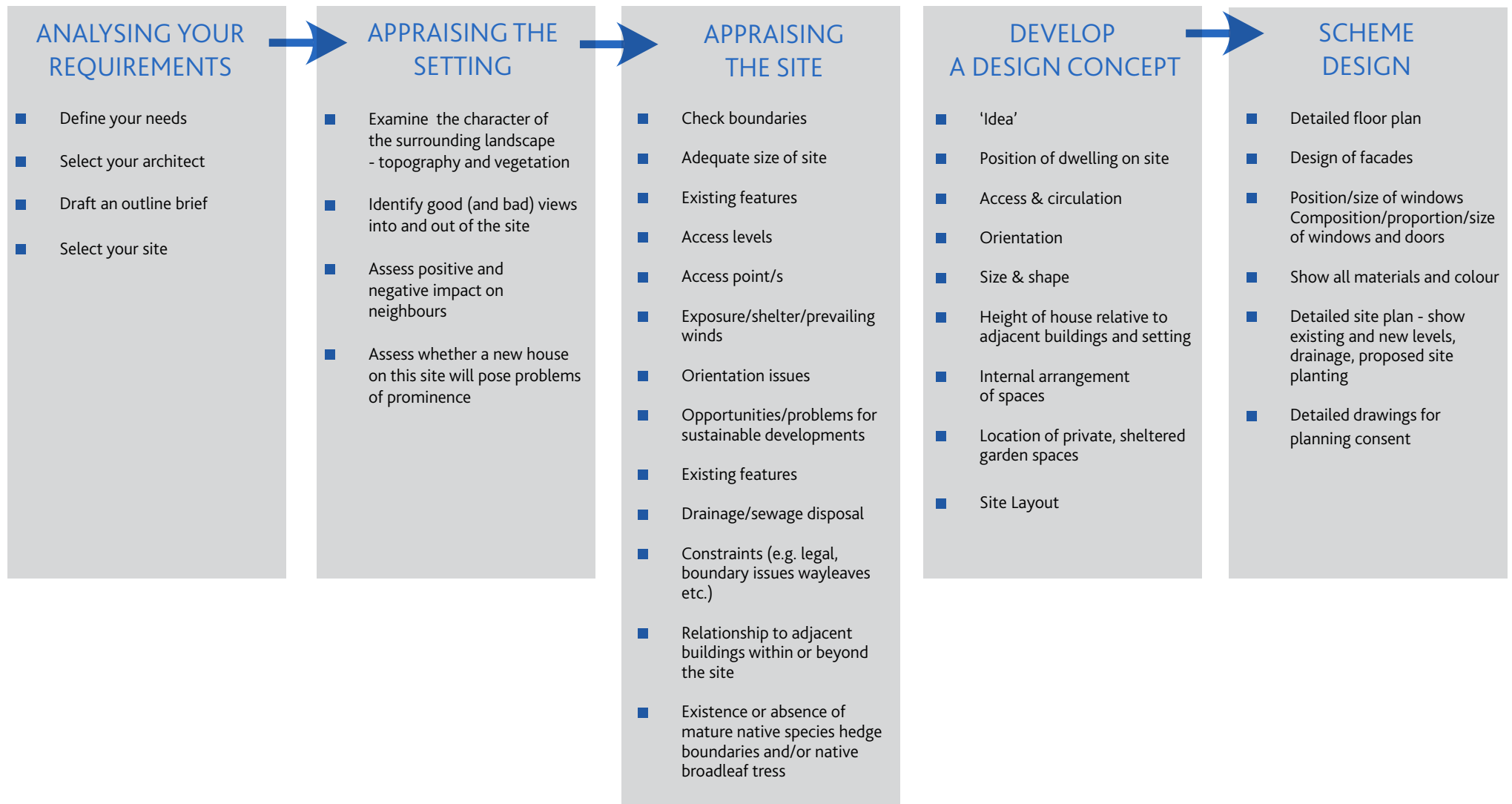
The Guide concludes with Part 5 which includes a worked example of the design stages from the beginning to planning application stage. This applies the guidance outlined in Parts 1-4.

This document is intended to provide a step by step guide to ensure informed decisions are made during the design process. The guide does not provide a pattern book of "good design". Instead it seeks to raise the quality of design.



1.3 the design PROCESS

The diagram below outlines the key stages in the design process. By its very nature a good design process is iterative (circular). It does not follow a simple linear sequence. The diagram below is intended to illustrate those tasks that will generally need to be undertaken if a design project is to result in a successful solution. Many of these occur in tandem. They may need to be re-examined as the brief is refined during the design process.







the signature of MONAGHAN

2. The Signature of Monaghan...

- 2.1 Character & Context
- 2.2 The Rural Landscape
- 2.3 Building Typology
- 2.4 Settlement Patterns
- 2.5 Materials/Colour
- 2.6 Potential of Re-using Existing Buildings

2.1 character & CONTEXT

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SECTION

To identify the key ingredients that make up the particular character of the landscape and built environment of rural County Monaghan.

WHAT IS CHARACTER?

Character is what makes Co Monaghan unique, different from other counties. It is the things that are found in this area and no where else. These include:

- Natural topography – drumlin landscape interspersed with lakes
- Indigenous vegetation – trees, hedgerows and shrubs
- Soil and rock types – these affect colour and type of vegetation
- Field patterns – small fields with hedge boundaries
- Building types
- Local Materials

An assessment of character examines the overall aesthetic quality of what we see and assess whether it is pleasing to look at or not. It identifies very special and attractive ingredients in the mix listed previously and signals when the aesthetic quality of some of these things is under threat.

Buildings have a huge impact on the character of an area in a way that is disproportionate to the land area they occupy. Changes in building types can dramatically change the character of an area very quickly. What are the key elements of rural housing in Co Monaghan? How do they sit in the County's countryside?

WHY IS CHARACTER IMPORTANT?

The particular character of an area is its identity. If an area starts to lose its unique elements, its identity changes. If these elements are lost then the area becomes more homogeneous, and then its character becomes less distinctive. In recent years Monaghan has experienced a standardised architectural approach, with countless architectural limitations littered throughout the rural landscape. This is a loss to the local community and has a negative impact on the County's unique identity.





It is important to identify the patterns of Co Monaghan's rural character - both past and present to see what lessons can be learnt from them. These lessons can be applied in the design and siting of new houses being built in the countryside today so that we achieve continuity with the main traditional characteristics. This will allow new house types to evolve in response to modern living aspirations. This will reinforce, and where necessary repair, the County's unique regional identity.

HISTORIC CULTURAL CONTEXT

Historically three major formative forces¹ have been identified as being at work in the making of the built environment within the Irish landscape:

- Isolation
- Poverty
- Colonisation

Ireland's peripheral location on the edge of mainland Europe meant it was relatively isolated from the influence of newly emerging architectural styles on the continent with the result that change came slowly and was often diluted. Within the countryside rural dwellings were also relatively isolated from their neighbours. Widespread poverty across Ireland was reflected in a predominance of small landholdings outside the landed estates, and small scale vernacular architecture. Colonisation brought the influence and wealth of the Ascendancy class. The fine architecture

of their large country houses and other estate buildings such as stables, workers' cottages etc were the result. The impact of industrialisation in the countryside was minor and came in the form of isolated mill buildings, canal and railway architecture.

The three forces highlighted above resulted in unique patterns of built development that were quite different from what was happening in mainland Europe² and gave Ireland its own unique characteristics. Their influences were reflected in the historic rural architecture of Co Monaghan as much as anywhere else.

(1 refers to "A Lost Tradition - The Nature of Architecture in Ireland" Niall McCullough and Valerie Mulvin, 1987)





NEW WAVE OF HOUSEBUILDING

We are experiencing what is arguably the most dynamic construction period in the history of the County since the Ulster Plantation. People are expressing their new found wealth in their homes with many making lifestyle choices to build afresh in the countryside. Already it is being transformed quite dramatically.



PAUL KEOGH ARCHITECTS

A COUNTRYSIDE WORTH VISITING

Much of the new rural housing built in the Co Monaghan countryside during the 1970s and 80s has been unremarkable in terms of design quality. Though these did little to enhance the natural beauty of the place their relatively small size did not dominate the wider landscape to any great extent.

However the size and scale of new rural houses within the County has been increasing at an alarming rate. There are numerous examples of recently built houses of poor design quality, enormous size and poor siting that fail to harmonise with the surrounding countryside. Although many are built in high quality materials with expensive landscaping and boundary features, their design shows little regard for their natural surroundings and many detract greatly from the beauty of the wider landscape. In a very short space of time these changes are impacting negatively on the character and identity of the Co Monaghan countryside. The County's once attractive rural character is being diluted and is under significant threat.



THE FUTURE

There are strong indicators that a new influence is emerging - global warming and depleting world oil reserves.

This raises the issue of a sustainable approach to rural development and poses a number of questions and dilemmas. These will be examined in greater detail later in this section.



BALANCE

It is understandable that people want to live in the countryside; however it is a non-renewable resource. As the density of single houses increases the countryside will eventually lose its character. It is necessary to achieve a balance between facilitating the regeneration of rural communities and protecting the character and aesthetic quality of the countryside.



2.2 the rural LANDSCAPE

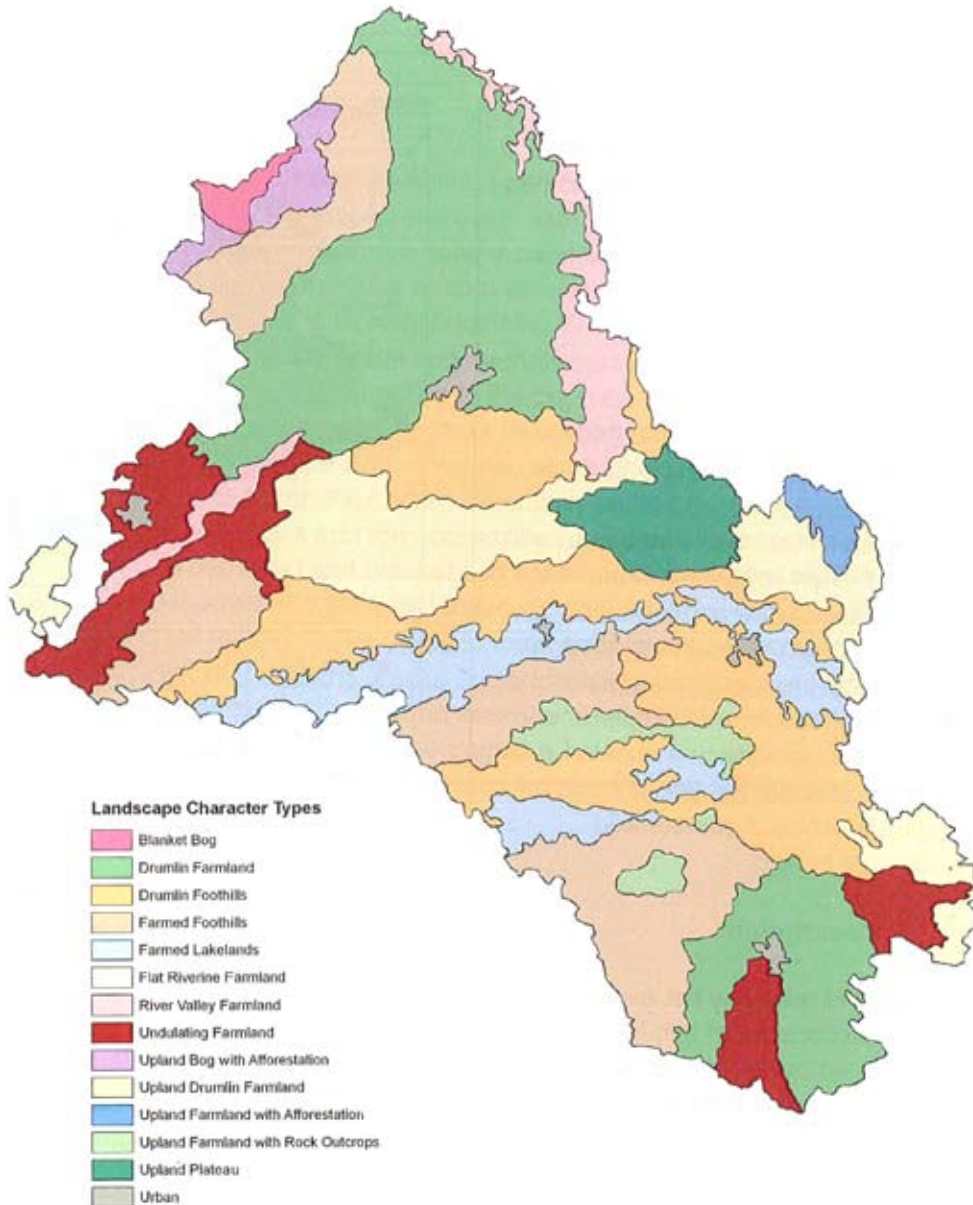
THE MONAGHAN LANDSCAPE

Monaghan contains a rich variety of landscapes, it is a landlocked county bounded by Tyrone, Fermanagh, Armagh, Cavan, Meath and Louth.

The high upland landscapes include the mountain moorland associated with Sliabh Beagh, which supports peatland habitats and a range of water waterbodies and small streams. Other upland landscapes include farmland associated with Mullyash Mountain on the eastern County boundary and a number of isolated rocky outcrops in the southern part of the County. A central low lying chain of Lakelands extend across the entire width of the County from Rockcorry to Castleblayney, dividing higher ground to the north and south. This Lakeland farmland features pastoral landuses and important wetland habitats around the lakes which are fringed with reeds and riparian vegetation.

To the north and south of the Lakeland, upland drumlin farmland becomes the dominant land form and use. These elevated landscapes rise above low lying farmland and generally extend in an east west direction across the county.

County Monaghan contains extensive river systems including the River Blackwater which is located to the north east and broadly defines the County boundary.





Further south, the River Finn extends from Smithborough to Clones and Lough Erne in Fermanagh.

The principal urban areas located in the north and the west include Monaghan and Clones, located in the foothills of the upland farmland associated with the northern half of the County. Further south, Castleblayney and Ballybay represent the main urban areas located in the low lying Lakeland area. Carrickmacross is characterized by flat plains and drumlins.

WHAT IS A LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA?

Landscape character areas are the unique individual geographical areas in which landscape types occur. They share generic characteristics with other areas of the same type but also have their own particular identity.

Thirteen Landscape Character Types have been defined within Monaghan County. (For more detailed information refer to the County Monaghan Landscape Character Assessment)

BLANKET BOG

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Elevated, flat and open, moorland landscape with extensive long range views
- Peatland habitat cover throughout with no field pattern present or boundary subdivisions
- Occasionally Loughs

- Presence of small mountain streams
- Minor roads present, the edges of which can be lined with wind pruned native shrubs species and
- Absence of settlements and few if any single dwellings. It is a remote wild landscape setting.
- Absence of settlements and few if any single dwellings

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

The open and exposed character of these areas with their panoramic views makes them quite sensitive to change, though forestry is the most predominant land use this is likely to result in a significant landscape change.

DRUMLIN FARMLAND

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Low lying small to medium sized drumlins predominantly in a north to south orientation
- A patchwork of predominantly medium sized fields defined typically by native hedgerows and used for pasture
- Dispersed small to medium sized Loughs
- Extensive network of tertiary roads
- Isolated and small clusters of farm and residential properties
- Minor roads bounded occasionally by large estates, the boundary definition being cut limestone walling



IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

An increase in the number of individual residential properties could place pressure on this landscape if sited or designed inappropriately. This landscape contains a proliferation of single dwellings and small clusters of rural housing, generally on a small scale and relatively simple in terms of design detail. These dwellings have not caused significant injury to this landscape and many are well sited in lower lying areas. In a number of locations, particularly on approaches to Monaghan and Carrickmacross, larger developments are evident. A number of small, traditional stone built villages such as Emyvale and Glaslough are prominent in this landscape. Glaslough and Tullyree contain more recently developed residential areas which are simple in design and rendered white. Further development which is out of scale and character may compromise the landscape.



DRUMLIN FOOTHILLS

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Rising ground with small to medium sized drumlins predominantly in a north to south orientation
- Mid to long ranging views
- A patchwork of predominantly small sized well drained fields typically defined by native hedgerows and used for pasture
- Patches of heath (*Calluna* spp) and gorse (*Ulex* spp)
- Isolated farm and residential properties

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

There are no larger settlements or discrete urban areas within this landscape type. Individual houses grouped with farm buildings are served by tertiary roads and rural lanes. Single rural houses are present in remote locations some of which have had a significant visual impact. Further unchecked development could compromise the integrity of this landscape.





FARMED FOOTHILLS

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Rising ground comprising rolling hills, and occasional drumlins
- Localised valleys featuring streams
- Mid to long ranging views towards higher upland pastures and/or moorland
- A patchwork of predominantly small sized well drained fields defined typically by hedgerows containing native species and used for pasture and small scale forestry
- Patches of heath (*Calluna* spp) and gorse (*Ulex* spp)
- Tracts of peat and/or bog and
- Isolated farm and residential properties

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

Settlements are very small and farm buildings tend to be old. In some places they are derelict. Characteristic corrugated tin green roofs have aided visual integration. By contrast more recent farm buildings have had a far greater visual impact. A proliferation of single dwellings in remote areas has also impacted upon the landscape quality.

FARMED LOUGHLANDS

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- The lakeland corridor between Lough Muckno and the County boundary at Cootehill is essentially a low lying farmed landscape containing large loughs punctuated by prominent drumlins. This low lying landscape is enclosed physically and visually by upland drumlin farmlands located to the north and south of the area. The lakeland area further south is associated with a more elevated open landscape setting
- The land cover is predominantly pasture, although there are tracts of forestry and woodland around the loughs to the south and to the west of the vicinity of Drumlona Lough and Inner Lough
- Crannogs are common features in the lakes and
- Regional and minor roads are located in the Lakeland area, connecting Ballybay and Castleblayney, both principal and County towns. The lakeland further south also contains major and minor roads but no towns or villages are present

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

Farm buildings are few in number and are well concealed by the variable topography and discreet shelterbelts.



The expansion of Ballybay and Castleblayney has resulted in increased residential development. If these are not sensitively sited and well designed they may compromise landscape character.

FLAT RIVERINE FARMLAND

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A flat, and gently undulating landscape associated with the flood plains of the River Fane to the east and the River Finn to the west
- Pastoral landuses combined with frequent areas of marshy ground
- Minor roads and settlements. These are few in number and very small

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

Farm buildings are more visible in this open landscape and a significant number are in a state of disrepair. Single rural homes are located in remote locations, some of which are poorly sited and designed. Further development, if unchecked, may compromise the character of the landscape.

RIVER VALLEY FARMLAND

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Flat to undulating pastoral landscape
- Rivers Finn, Blackwater and Cor are principal landscape elements
- The landscape is permeated by minor roads, with few settlements
- Winding minor roads edged with earthen banks affording restricted views

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

There appears to be an aggregation of existing clusters of housing, resulting in development which is out of scale and/or character in this context. The pressure for housing is particularly intense in these areas as land is generally flat. Further development of roads may threaten the low lying wetland and riverine habitats.





■ UNDULATING FARMLAND

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A patchwork of predominantly medium sized fields defined typically by native species hedgerows and used for pasture
- The town of Clones represents a significant urban settlement located in an elevated or hilly position
- Numerous ring and fairy forts identified by wooded crests to prominent hills to the west of Inniskeen
- Isolated farm and residential properties

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

Single rural homes are located in remote locations, some of which have been insensitively sited and designed. Further development may compromise the character of the landscape.

■ UPLAND BOG WITH AFFORESTATION

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large tracts of commercial coniferous forestry dominate this landscape type
- Poor quality pastoral farmland with wetland grasses present. Fields bounded by hedge rows
- Pockets of peatland habitat present in between large areas of coniferous forest
- Presence of small rivers including the Mountain Water River and occasional loughs

- Minor roads and infrequent dwellings
- Elevated, open hills and, moorland landscape with extensive long range views across the wider landscape

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

Settlements are scarce within this character type and individual dwellings are spread sparsely reinforcing the remote character.

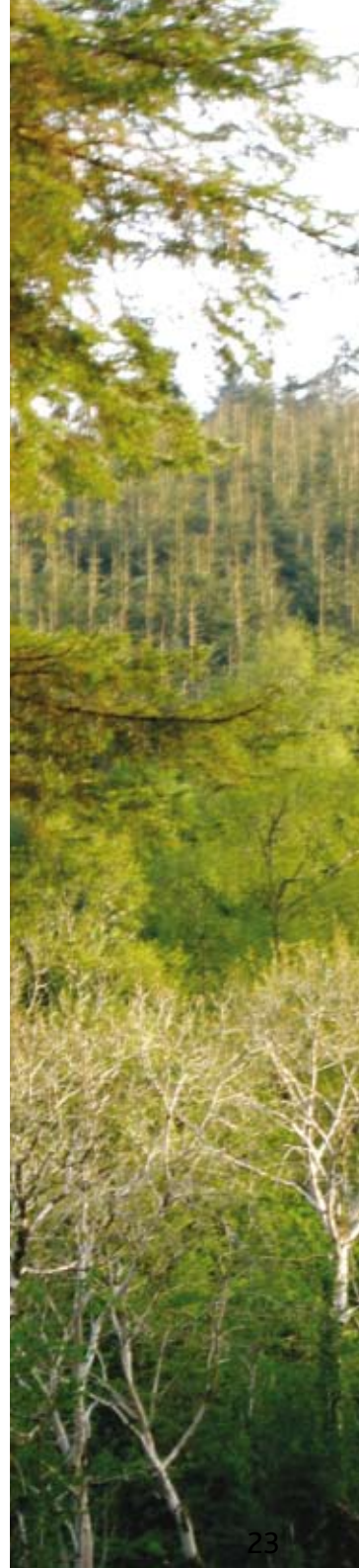
■ UPLAND DRUMLIN FARMLAND

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Elevated, rolling hills and drumlins with extensive long range views across the wider landscape
- Poor to moderate quality pastoral farmland with wetland grasses. Fields bounded by hedgerows and fences
- Small tracts of commercial coniferous forestry
- Pockets of peatland habitat and scrub present throughout pasture
- Proliferation of minor roads and individual farms and dwellings

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

Farms and individual properties are generally spread out and visual impact has been minimised by topography and small shelterbelts that provide screening.





UPLAND FARMLAND WITH AFFORESTATION

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Well elevated and steep rising ground up to Mullyash and gently rolling hills surrounding the summit, with a predominantly pastoral landuse
- Large tracts of commercial use forestry at the summit of Mullyash Mountain
- Occasional long range views east to the Mourne Mountains and wide ranging views westwards

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

In terms of development patterns, this landscape is relatively remote, containing few dwellings and farmsteads, some of which lie derelict. Access is by minor roads only.

UPLAND FARMLAND WITH ROCK OUTCROPS

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Rising ground comprising undulating to rolling pastoral farmland of variable quality and condition

- Irregular ridges with outcrops of rock on or near to summits
- More elevated areas have smaller scale field pattern, sometimes this pattern is broken
- Fields bounded by hedgerows at lower elevations and by dry stone walls at higher elevations
- Occasional loughs
- Occasional tracts of commercial coniferous forestry
- Medium to long range views in relatively open landscape
- Remote few dwellings and or farm buildings
- Access is by minor roads only

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

In terms of settlement pattern, this landscape is remote containing few dwellings or farm groups.





■ UPLAND PLATEAU

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A flat to slightly undulating elevated landscape
- Pastoral landuses represented as a series of fields bounded by hedgerows
- Clumps of deciduous scrub woodland
- Pockets of peatland and marsh
- Occasional small loughs
- Access is by minor roads
- Generally an open or exposed landscape with medium to long range views

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

Settlement patterns are limited to isolated farmsteads and individual houses served by a network of minor roads and tracks. The N2 bisects the area in a north west to south east direction, linking Monaghan to Castleblayney. The continuing decline in farming is evident from the presence of abandoned and derelict buildings which in turn affect the character of the landscape.



2.3 building TYPOLOGY

BUILDING TYPES

County Monaghan has a rich diversity in the size and scale of its historic domestic buildings (pre mid 20th century). The vast majority of these sit very comfortably into their surrounding rural landscape. They fall into the following main groups:

THE "BIG HOUSE"

The "Big Houses" of The Ulster Plantation or The Ascendancy usually dominate a very large estate of many hundreds of acres. Other much smaller domestic buildings within the estate are usually remote from the 'Big House' and never compete with it visually. These houses have their roots in the architectural tradition of the European Renaissance though some built later are Victorian in their architectural expression.



THE SMALLER CLASSICAL HOUSE

The familiar "cube" form with its Georgian sash windows dates from the 17th century to our own time. Historically, the smaller versions were built by landlords for key workers, by the church as Glebe Houses or rectories. These were followed by socially aspiring farmers. Many have supporting outbuildings (barns, stables etc) around a courtyard. Common in most parts of the country and using similar materials to the modest farmhouse they are as much part of the vernacular as the traditional thatched cottage.



VICTORIAN HOUSES

The one-off houses built during the Victorian era were generally close to towns and were often quite imposing.



THE VERNACULAR COTTAGE

The simplest house type of all was the two or three roomed single storey cottage that either sat within a farmyard or by the side of the road. Built in rubble stone with primitive roof trusses and originally thatched in straw or flax these are vernacular but have a natural 'classic' balance in their proportions and the relationship of thick walls to small windows.



FARMHOUSE GROUPINGS

As the small cottage grew to accommodate a more prosperous farm household they picked up local influences from the Classical tradition such as more formality in the arrangement of outbuildings around the house and yard. Often forecourts occurred in front of the front door.



1970S BUNGALOW

A modest improvement in economic standards combined with money from America or England allowed people to escape the cramped and damp conditions of the vernacular cottages and farmhouses. The bungalow with its large picture windows set back behind a series of dramatic arches became de-rigueur. Although largely built in similar materials to their predecessors (painted plaster and slate roofs) these houses showed a marked departure in that they lacked the natural "classical" balance and pleasing proportions of their predecessors. They failed to enhance the landscape.



MODERN DWELLINGS

Recently, extremely large houses (some as much as 6,000 square feet) have been emerging in the Co Monaghan countryside. This house type falls somewhere between the grandest 18th century "Big House" and the more modest Glebe Houses but that is where the resemblance ends.



LEARNING LESSONS FROM THE PAST

Almost without exception all of the houses built before the mid 20th century achieve a visually harmonious relationship with the surrounding landscape. This was achieved by close scrutiny of the context of the area, the characteristics and capacity of the site and the formation of a building appropriate to its landscape.

IMPACT OF HOUSES BUILT SINCE MID 20TH CENTURY

Usually poorly proportioned both in terms of overall form and in detail (windows, doors, porches etc) these houses are a collection of conflicting architectural styles. They lack the architectural quality and stately presence of their 18th and 19th century predecessors.

Their details may imitate past architectural styles but on close inspection have none of their refinement and craftsmanship.





SIZE

This guide does not seek to prohibit large houses in the countryside. Past examples demonstrate that it is possible to locate large houses in the countryside without visual detriment when these are well designed and sited.

However when houses are extremely large, poorly designed, badly sited, and built in a cacophony of materials that depart significantly from the Co Monaghan vernacular they have a major negative impact. The creeping loss of distinctive character that began in the 1970s will continue unless clarity in terms of appropriate design is established.

This will maintain a key objective of sustainable development ie: protection of the aesthetic quality of our most valuable and non-renewable assets.



UNSIGHTLY RIBBON DEVELOPMENT DETRACTS FROM THE RURAL CHARACTER



2.4 settlement PATTERNS

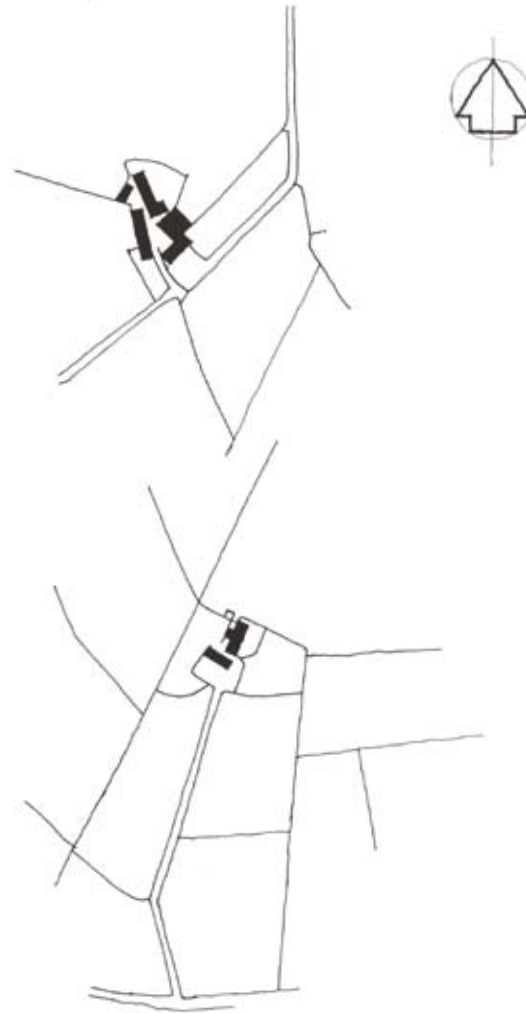
SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

Historical Ordnance Survey maps provide evidence of traditional patterns of settlement in the Co. Monaghan countryside. Often strong characteristics can be identified. The following illustrations show examples of four strong settlement patterns evident in the county.



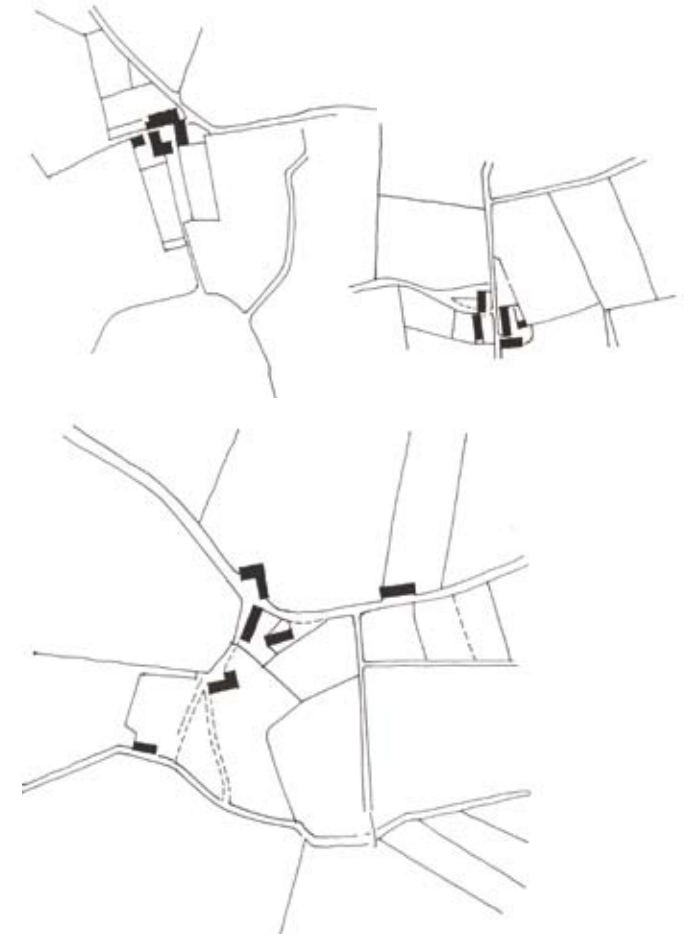
FARM HOUSE AND OUTBUILDINGS CLUSTER ON LANEWAY

- Usually in single ownership and accessed via a long narrow lane
- Linear house and irregular grouping of linear farm sheds
- Usually remote from the next farm grouping



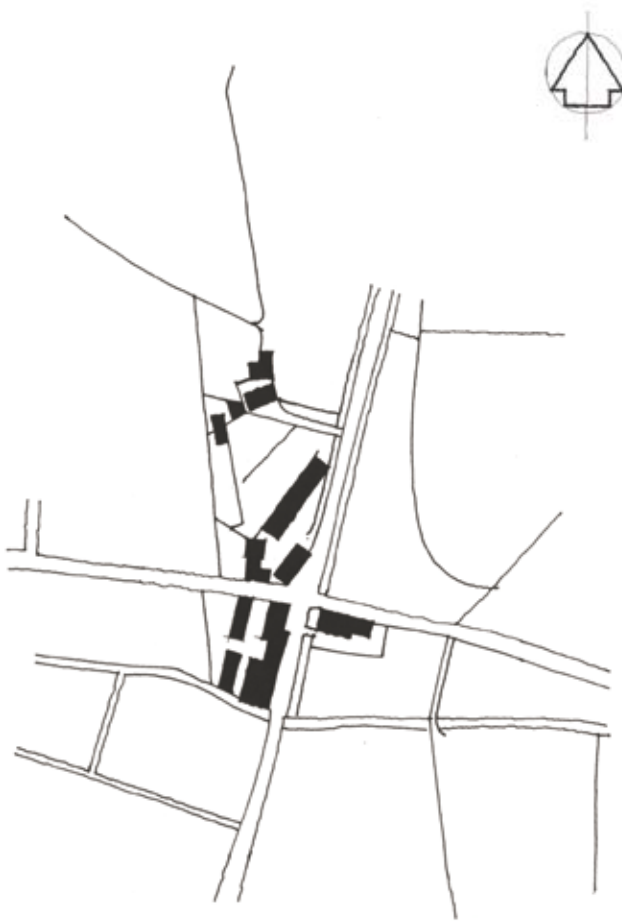
FARM HOUSE AND OUTBUILDINGS CLUSTER FRONTING COUNTY ROAD

Often U or L shaped grouping of a linear house fronting onto a forecourt that is open to the County Road. The house is sometimes at an angle to the road. Irregular grouping of linear farm sheds. Single ownership. Sometimes isolated but also with neighbouring cluster close by - often a short distance away on the other side of road and/or up a lane.



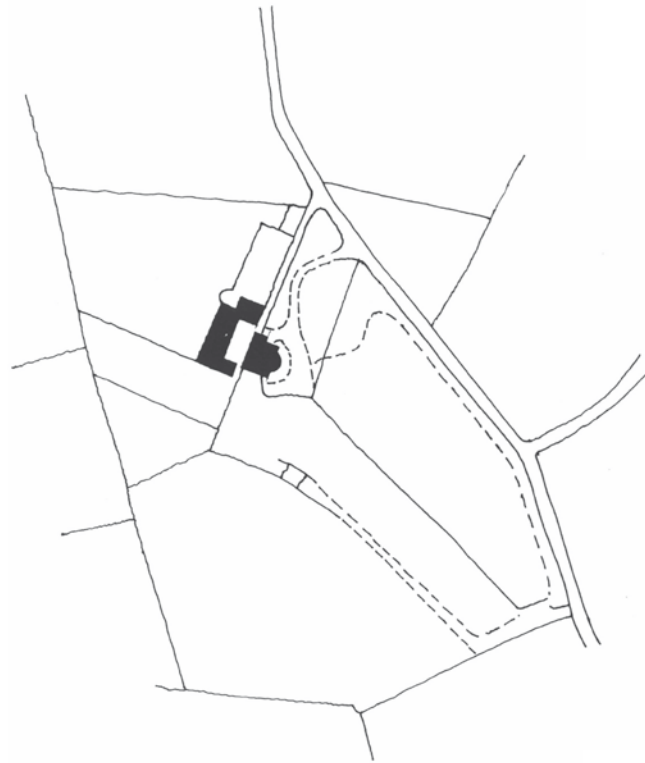
CROSSROADS

Buildings (in multiple ownership) are built up to the road line on three or more corners of a cross road. This forms a distinctive "semi-urban" grouping. It is usually relatively isolated.

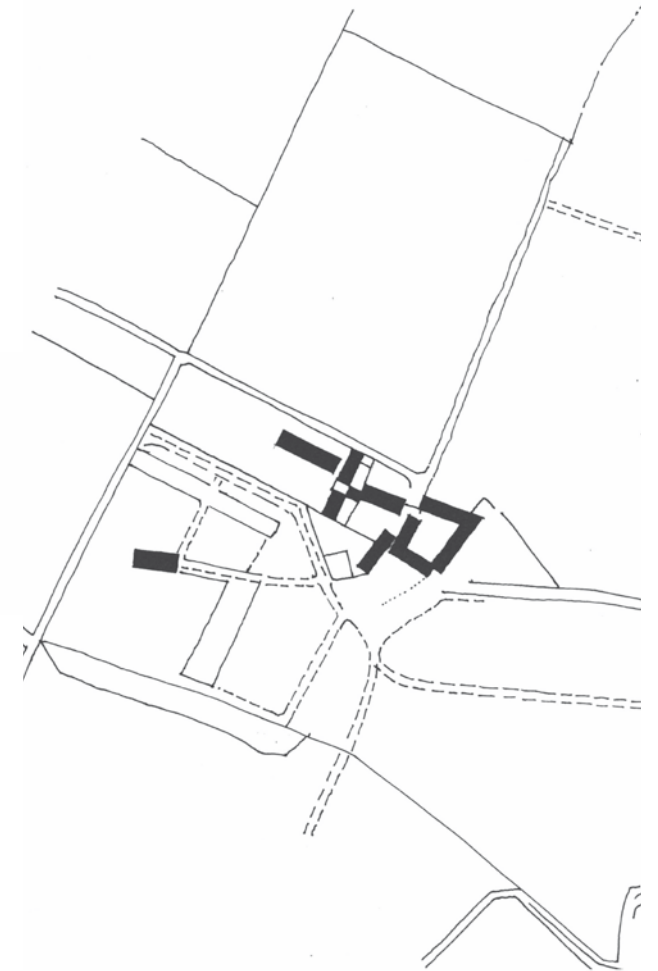


SMALL COUNTRY HOUSE

Classical "cube" or box house fronts onto a formal garden and/or small woodland with a rear courtyard enclosed by linear farm barns.



Some small Country Houses have extensive groupings of farmbarns, stables and workers' housing grouped formally around one or more courtyards. They are isolated within their own large acreage.



2.5 materials/ COLOUR

Historically walling material in rural house construction in Co Monaghan was predominantly rubble stone. The habitable portions of cottages and farm houses were often brightened up by limewashing directly onto the stone.

Later most houses were finished externally in traditional lime based plaster with a smooth or roughcast finish or in pebble dash providing a second line of defence against the dampness due to penetrating rain. Unpainted this render had a soft luminous light grey colour. More usually whitewash was applied. This sometimes had an earth pigment added (such as ochre) giving a buff or soft buttermilk colour.

Recently it has become fashionable to pick external plaster off traditional rubble stone buildings leaving the stone exposed and diluting the traditional character of these buildings. The trend has influenced a new aesthetic in rural housing. Natural and imitation stone have become increasingly popular as a facing on all or parts of new houses. This is a significant and regrettable departure from the County's strong traditional characteristic of rendered (painted or unpainted) rural housing.

Historically the use of brick (either on its own or in conjunction with rubble stone) was a feature of the Victorian era. Such houses were frequently within landed estates and not often visible from the wider landscape.

Concrete blockwork cavity wall construction, rendered, was the cheapest and most common form of construction for much of the 20th century during which cement based renders overtook traditional lime. Left unpainted these have a darker grey hue than the traditional lime render.





Over time cement renders develop a mellow patina that has a character all of its own. Unpainted cement and lime renders blend well into the rural landscape.

In the past 10 years a large number of rural houses built in red brick and/or natural/reconstituted stone has given rise to an aesthetically unsuccessful though very dominant characteristic. This is detracting from the visual quality of the Co Monaghan landscape.

Roofs were traditionally either thatched, sheeted in corrugated iron (often painted red, green or left galvanised) or slated (invariably Welsh Bangor Blues). More recently other roofing materials have emerged – blue black concrete roof tiles, and in cases red clay pantiles.

The use of thatch on a new house is uncommon today however it is a renewable material and is very acceptable visually and in terms of sustainable design.

In general houses that adhere to the palette of materials identified as those most characteristic of rural vernacular buildings in Co Monaghan will be considered favourably:

- Rendered Masonry (Unpainted or painted in subtle greys, off white, buff and cream)
- Natural slate (blue black)
- Corrugated iron
- Thatch

Materials that are not listed above may be appropriate as part of a particularly innovative design concept. A judgment should be made against how well such proposals blend harmoniously with the rural landscape. Such materials and designs will need to be of a high architectural standard to be acceptable.



2.6 potential of re-using existing BUILDINGS

County Monaghan has an abundance of derelict dwellings and sites. In an era where there is an increase in demand for houses in the countryside the re-use of existing semi-derelict dwellings and the redevelopment of mature sites is a preferable and more sustainable option than a new build on a greenfield site.

Disused historic buildings in the countryside offer huge potential as a means of repairing and reinforcing the County's regional character. They represent a social and cultural way of life now long and embody an architectural expression that is unique, authentic and invariably pleasing.

Their re-use is consistent with the aims of sustainable development. With existing access lanes and mature boundary planting, they absorb new inhabitants discreetly without detriment to the existing visual quality of the countryside.

The materials that make up these buildings carry within them what is known as an embodied energy value i.e. the energy that it took to extract them from the ground and transport them to the site. Bringing a ruin back to life avoids expending extra energy to extract and transport all the materials that are needed for a new house.

However the solid masonry construction of these buildings means that achieving the insulation standards required to meet today's energy conscious Building Regulations can be a challenge.





BUILDINGS AT RISK

The County is peppered with numerous historic buildings of all sizes in various states of dereliction. If action is not taken soon these will be undoubtedly lost. These are a glimpse of times past. Their presence within the wider landscape strengthens its architectural diversity, richness and consolidates its character and identity.

REFURBISHMENT

A derelict cottage can offer much potential. It can be possible to give it new life as a comfortable, attractive home meeting modern needs but still retaining its original character.

Many of these old buildings sit within a mature landscape setting adding instant maturity and character to its setting.

CONVERSION

Even old buildings whose first role was for something else (eg: mills, warehouses, farm barns etc) can be successfully converted to residential use and offer interesting possibilities in terms of the types of spaces that can be created inside. The re-use and conversion of existing historic buildings in the countryside helps to protect the County's unique heritage and reinforces its identity.



Proposals for sensitive re-use, conversion and conservation of traditional buildings will be encouraged while proposals which may result in the destruction of the original architectural form and detail will be discouraged.

SPECIALIST ADVICE

Specialist professional advice and construction skills are required to achieve high quality conservation. Advice should be sought from a conservation architect to test the feasibility of retaining a particular old building to meet your needs before buying. The RIAI Conservation Register lists architects who have specialist skills in this type of work.

SIGNATURE ASPECTS

SOME KEY CHARACTERISTICS...

LANDSCAPE

- The County's drumlin landscape with its tight field pattern and tradition of indigenous hedges is capable of absorbing new houses provided they are well sited. Some minor excavation may be necessary but this should be avoided.

PRESENTATION TO THE ROAD

- The evolution of what is known as "ribbon

development" where a number of detached houses in a line front onto a main road has been evident since the 1970s. This type of development integrates poorly into the rural landscape.

- Traditionally there are many examples in the county of small cottages and farm groupings built close to a main road. These usually front directly onto it with an irregular forecourt that is open to the road, or with the gable of a shed or house presented to the road. Such buildings are invariably isolated along a given length of roadside and do not form the linear development described above. They are also generally small scale and integrate well.
- Increased noise levels and loss of privacy due to today's traffic levels makes the traditional arrangement of a house fronting a forecourt open to the road much less attractive. However modern design can draw on these traditional patterns to maintain the essence of this traditional vernacular pattern and better integrate development into the landscape.
- Where new single houses are in close proximity to a county road they should be sited in a way that maintains the patterns outlined above (and referred to in pages 30 and 31) and should be set back from the road and accessed via a single track hedged laneway.



GROUPINGS OF MAIN DWELLING AND OUTBUILDINGS

- Traditionally farmhouses in Co Monaghan were built as part of a bigger grouping that comprised a one or two storey main farmhouse with outbuildings arranged to form either an L shaped or U shaped group around a farmyard. New houses that draw on this generic siting layout should be encouraged. Designers can re-interpret this in an innovative way and give it a contemporary expression.



OTHER TRADITIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Access - this was invariably via a long tree lined avenue or through deciduous forests to reach 'Big Houses'. Hedge lined single track laneways or a narrow lane running through a small stand of trees usually provided access to smaller country houses, 'Glebe's', rectories, farmhouses and cottages (except where the latter fronted onto an open forecourt facing the County Road).

Nestling within field patterns - Many houses were often set back from a Main County Road (though this was not always the traditional arrangement)

Shelter - sites were usually positioned on the lower slopes of a hillside rather than on the exposed hilltop

Access roads often followed existing contours and the alignment of field boundaries.

Scale - is generally small

Trees - Generous use of deciduous broadleaf trees (to provide shelter from prevailing winds) also acts to soften the visual impact of the house

Simple form and detail.





Proportions are pleasing to the eye both in terms of overall form as well as the size and position of window and door openings within a façade.

UNADORNED DETAILS

LIMITED PALETTE OF EXTERNAL MATERIALS:

- Wood float finish render (painted or unpainted)
- natural slate – blue/black or Bangor Blue
- corrugated iron (this needs to be carefully handled since modern equivalents present detailing issues and are difficult to use in a visually simple way)
- Ashlar finish natural stone. This should be natural and locally sourced. If sourced from elsewhere it should be natural and match the colour and texture of local stone

SIMPLICITY

Simplicity of form – The most successful rural house designs are those which draw on the essence of simplicity in the form and detail of traditional houses. This does not mean that the end result should be a pastiche of a traditional house. Pastiche is discouraged. Innovation and creative flair is encouraged where it translates the simplicity of the past into something that sits sen-

sitively into the landscape and is also rooted in the 21st century.

Simplicity in detail – a marked feature of the traditional vernacular farmhouse or cottage is great simplicity in everything. Even the large 18th century Irish Country Houses built in the Palladian Classical style are relatively austere and have minimal decoration.

The following elements of design need careful consideration:

- shapes of building blocks
- window openings and frames
- door openings and design of doors
- omit barge boards on cottages or vernacular farmhouses
- limit the palette of materials
- limit the use of colour





TRADITIONAL HOUSE FORMS

- Square, hipped roof block – two storey (solid, closed quality)
- Double pitched linear - initially one unit, perhaps with later additional accretions added in a line
- Double pitched forming an L or U in plan – one and two storey

TRADITIONAL RURAL OUTBUILDING FORMS

- Lean-to shed
- Curved Belfast truss with or without lean-to additions
- Enclosing rubble stone walls associated with walled gardens at Big Houses







what to CONSIDER FIRST...

WHAT TO CONSIDER FIRST

- 3.1 Analysis of Requirements
- 3.2 Appraising the Setting
- 3.3 Appraising the Site
- 3.4 Develop a Design Concept

INTRODUCTION

The successful incorporation of one-off houses into the countryside depends on a thorough analysis of the setting, site and brief and the creation of a design that responds well to all three. The quality of design must be applied to a whole range of issues from the macro to the micro.

THE FOLLOWING KEY QUESTIONS AND ISSUES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AT THE BEGINNING AND THROUGHOUT THE DESIGN PROCESS.

1. Density - the number of houses in any given area of countryside
2. Size of dwelling
3. Proximity - of new house to existing houses
4. Size of site - in relation to size of house
5. Site features - the strengths (maximise these) and weaknesses (minimise these through good design)
6. Orientation – where does the sun rise and set. Good views towards the south or south west are best. Avoid sites with great views to the north.
7. Views into and out of the site
8. Site contours – these can pose difficulties or opportunities when integrating a house into the landscape or achieving access and vehicular circulation within the site.
9. Form – what is the overall shape of the proposed house? Is it a box or cube shape like small classical farm or country houses. Is it generally a linear form or is it a cuboid form with smaller offshoots such as a T or C house in plan?
10. Mass – ie. How bulky is it? If this is excessive reduce or break down its bulk.
11. Appearance - Scale, form, colour, materials in relation to surrounding context: landforms; field patterns; existing buildings and groups of mature trees all affect the appearance of houses.

What does the proposed house look like? What are the views towards the proposed house from the wider landscape. What will your house offer to the landscape in which it will sit? Will it enhance the view or detract from it?





3.1 analysis of REQUIREMENTS

TOWN OR COUNTRY - WHICH IS BEST FOR YOU?

Those who make choices to live in the countryside when their work is based in nearby towns or villages are substantially increasing the number of car journeys they will make in the course of our lives. They are also choosing to cause others to make journeys on their behalf whether that is in the provision of rural services such as refuse collection or visits by friends and family. This increases the consumption of energy and fuel and the emission of CO₂. This is increasingly environmentally unsustainable.

OTHER SUBTLE EFFECTS

The more people choose to live in the countryside the more its quality will be diminished. It is already clear that the increasing visual blight that is emerging as a result of more and more and larger and larger one-off houses in the countryside is detracting from the aesthetic quality of the countryside.

It is more sustainable both economically and environmentally to live as close to your place of work or school. For the vast majority this will be within the boundaries of a town or village.





SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainable development is about using the earth's finite resources- agricultural land, air, water, fuel and mineral reserves- wisely and without waste. The ability of future generations to meet their own needs should not be compromised by the activities of the present generation.

Energy efficiency in the design of buildings is not just an eco-friendly initiative; it is pragmatic and cost effective in the long term. Energy efficiency in design can result in reduced heating, cooling and lighting costs, as well as reducing individual and collective dependence on natural resources and artificial materials that impact on the environment.

"Sustainable design integrates consideration of resource and energy efficiency, healthy buildings and materials, ecologically and socially sensitive and use, and an aesthetic sensitivity that inspires, affirms and enables."

Sustainable development – "is development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland)



The basic principles of sustainable design of new houses in the countryside are:

- use of materials wisely and without waste
- maintain and enhance nature's diversity and beauty
- minimise non-renewable energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions
- minimal use of non-renewable and toxic materials
- avoid reinsert air-conditioning
- conservation of water
- recycle
- waste reduction
- minimal use of hazardous/polluting substances



SIZE

The larger the house the more energy it will take to heat and cool it. Recently there has been a definite trend towards larger and larger houses.

What is built today will be the legacy that this generation contributes to our successors. We can choose to make a positive contribution through more sensitive and sustainable development.

Increases in the energy load both in actual fuel consumption and also in the fabrication of the materials used in the construction of large buildings has negative sustainable impacts.

A more sustainable way is to identify the minimum size of house to meet living requirements and then design the house to minimise your consumption of energy resources. Dependence on traditional fossil fuel as sources of energy can be reduced by capturing the energy that is free - from the sun - by passive solar heating.

Passive solar space heating depends on the form, orientation of rooms and the fabric of the building –the levels of insulation in the walls, floor, roof and windows.

A Direct Gain system is the most useful passive solar method for Ireland's climate. It is the simplest solar collection technique and the easiest to construct. It is explained more fully in Section 4.5.

This approach insulates the enclosing envelope to a high degree, reduces energy consumed within the house by minimising the number of electrical fittings and using low energy electrical equipment as much as possible.

Solar gain is maximised by positioning larger (or more) windows on the south and west sides of the house and heat loss is minimised by making windows as small as possible on the northern side.

What are known as active systems - photovoltaic cells, solar panels, wind turbines, heat pumps, grey water treatment systems etc have been shown to make a relatively small contribution and should be the last elements to be considered when designing a house to reduce consumption of fossil fuels.





COX POWER ARCHITECTS



ENCHION REUTER ARCHITECTS

DEFINE THE BRIEF

Building a home is a major investment for anyone. It is important to decide on what and who is to be accommodated in the dwelling. How do you live? Are there ways in which your new home can support living more sustainably?

If the brief is inadequate or misses key aspects, the resulting house it will fall far short of its potential.

Many sites in the countryside have assets beyond the site boundaries that add substantial enjoyment to the dwelling such as the sun and good views.

Houses in the countryside are detached and always have two facades facing south and west. As long as these facades do not suffer from overshadowing from trees then designers can make use of passive solar heating in the plan layout and design of facades. Large windows facing south will result in heat gain and save energy. Large north facing windows will result in greater heat loss than the same windows facing south.

The process of defining and refining a brief can be lengthy. The brief will undergo some change along the way.



MARY KERRIGAN ARCHITECTS

KEY ELEMENTS OF A BRIEF

Decide on the number of rooms and any other accommodation needs you may have. In an effort to keep construction costs and energy consumption costs down decide whether you really need all the individual rooms you initially think you do. Consider whether some rooms could serve a number purposes, such as a sunspace doubling as a porch or dining area.

Every additional en suite bathroom or shower room adds to energy consumption both in the materials it will take to build the extra space and in the energy it will take to heat, ventilate and light it.

Also consider additional storage needs. For example is a garage really needed or would a spacious store suffice?

The brief can and should also refer to other things that are important to you. The following list is not a definitive guide to preparing a brief but does highlight some of the issues to consider and include in the brief at the earliest stage of the design process:

- House to sit sensitively in the Co Monaghan landscape
- Whether it is to be modern or traditional in character?
- Should take advantage of good views, sunlight and shelter
- Take advantage of passive solar heating potential

- Design to be energy conscious in every way, using construction materials that are renewable and natural
- Garden spaces that relate well to main daytime rooms; kitchen; dining; living room
- Consider the configuration of rooms relative to how you live- spacious open plan kitchen/dining living space or maybe a separate dining room or living room
- A house with enough space for now and room for future extension to minimise cleaning and maintenance costs
- Lots of natural daylight
- Minimise consumption of fossil fuels (oil and coal)
- A house which is modern and suits daily needs
- Indigenous hedges and trees to attract wildlife and provide shelter and privacy
- Low maintenance gardens
- A simple entrance to my house that respects local traditional patterns such a simple gate and gate posts
- Gravel for the driveway instead of tarmac
- Somewhere to park cars close to the house without blocking good views
- Discreet outdoor lighting (or none)

This list is not definitive. Some aspects of it will have cost implications and others will not. Ultimately the design brief should reflect the occupant's needs and way of life. Consult your designer early for help with this task.





CHOICE OF THE SITE

Once broad requirements to formulate a general brief have been established choosing where to build is a critical stage in the process. Depending on individual circumstances any number of factors influence. However the following points (positive and negative) should generally be considered when choosing a site:

1. BENEFITS OF LOCATING WITHIN OR ADJOINING AN EXISTING GROUP OF BUILDINGS I.E. FARM GROUP?

- Entrance exists
- Mature landscaping and boundaries exist
- Existing grouping may limit flexibility in design and form
- Proximity to adjacent dwellings results in greater sense of community
- Service provision may be in place



2. BENEFITS OF RE-USING/ CONSERVING AN EXISTING HISTORIC DWELLING

- Derelict historic building, site and setting exists
- Mature hedge boundaries and trees give instant enclosure and pleasing aspect
- Reinforced Co. Monaghan cultural heritage and identity
- Vernacular form exists
- A more sustainable approach reduces consumption of greenfield land and materials
- Entrance exists

3. BENEFITS OF NEW BUILD

- Blank canvas on which to create something new
- Lack of existing mature landscaping reduces privacy and enclosure initially
- House may be difficult to integrate as a result of immature planting
- New entrance required - may present issues for sight-lines
- Can design outside spaces to maximise amenity and privacy value
- New services required
- Least sustainable



3.2 APPRAISING the Setting

Before designing the details of your new house it is important to consider the potential impact on the context or setting of the site. A good contextual analysis will also actually inform the design concept. The setting is the landscape and buildings that can be seen close by and further away from the site, and the area from which the site can be observed. What is the general character of the area? Is the site within a grouping or on the edge of a settlement? Is it in a more remote rural area? Are there many dwellings nearby? What is the character of the surrounding landscape? Does the land rise or fall in the immediate vicinity of the site? Are there significant views into or out of the site? Is the site set into a hollow in the landscape or is it located on the side of a hill? Are there areas of dense vegetation within or surrounding the site? Are lands generally open and flat? Are there any significant features in the landscape, areas of dense woodland, lakes etc?

ASK YOURSELF...

- What is the sensitivity of the surrounding rural landscape?
- Does it offer good views from your site in one or more directions?
- Does the site lack privacy perhaps due to overlooking or a busy road?

- Are there neighbouring houses in close proximity?
- Establish key characteristics of the site in the landscape

SOME KEY ISSUES INCLUDE:

PROMINENCE

New dwellings must be integrated into the landscape. Therefore visually prominent locations such as hilltops, and elevated exposed sites should be avoided. Usually buildings that break the skyline successfully are landmarks such as church spires. It is important to be aware that prominent development can be seen when approaching the site from many directions.

TOPOGRAPHY

Buildings within the Co. Monaghan landscape are best integrated if placed on the lower slopes of hills. In the open countryside look for a reasonably flat site. This avoids the need to build a level platform or carry out major cut and fill.



WEATHERING AND SHELTER

High storms or bad weather can damage buildings. Exposed sites can make it very difficult to provide shelter for a dwelling.

Traditional methods of site layout involved making use of natural hollows in the landscape, sheltered areas beside woodland, working with contours (not against them), and generally avoiding exposed locations that suffer the worst effects of the wind and driving rain. (For guidance on landscape character and topography of the County, refer to 2.2)

PRIVACY

The form and orientation of the dwelling is determined by a variety of things such as the shape and size of the site, contours, the overall appearance of the landscape, access and car circulation. It is possible to capture a view well without the whole house facing towards it, e.g. by placing windows in gable ends or on corners. It is also important to achieve a balance between privacy and glazed frontages to the road.



3.3 APPRAISING the site

CONSIDER: -

- Size of site needed
- Is the site sufficient to accommodate the proposed dwelling?
- Where does the sun rise and set?
- Sites whose best views are to the south or south west are best
- Avoid north facing sloping sites where the south side of the site is a rising hill
- Are there any planning restrictions that could affect you getting planning permission?
- Are there any planning restrictions such as Restricted Prospects and Views or Areas of Primary or Secondary Amenity. These could affect you getting planning permission.
- What sort of existing buildings or other features does the site have? Do these make it more or less attractive e.g. a very mature tree could be an added bonus but not if it casts deep shadow on the south side of the site where you want to build.
- Is it sheltered or exposed?
- Does it have any restrictive features (e.g. very steep gradients that make car circulation difficult)?
- Will you be overlooked by neighbours?
- What is the land drainage like? If you have to install an on site effluent treatment system or a septic tank the soil will need to have good percolation to avoid

contaminating ground water or nearby streams and rivers. This should be assessed by a suitably qualified professional before you purchase.

- How do you get access onto the site? It is best if the site has or allows for the creation of a single track hedge lined laneway. Is there enough room to park and turn cars within the site?
- Is there any mature planting within the site or along its boundaries
- Are there legal issues, rights of way, leases or conflict over Title?
- Can major infilling/excavation be avoided?

PRINCIPLES OF SITE LAYOUT

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Take advantage of the site's and the wider landscape's natural assets as much as possible.

If the site is confined the house should be positioned so that it maximises the size of garden spaces to the south and west where pleasant gardens, and sunny external patios or barbeque areas can be created.

Opportunities offered by the site and wider landscape to integrate the house should guide or suggest the overall shape and form of the house (ie whether it is best designed as a single storey, two storey, or storey





and a half house; whether it has a linear configuration or tends towards a deep plan).

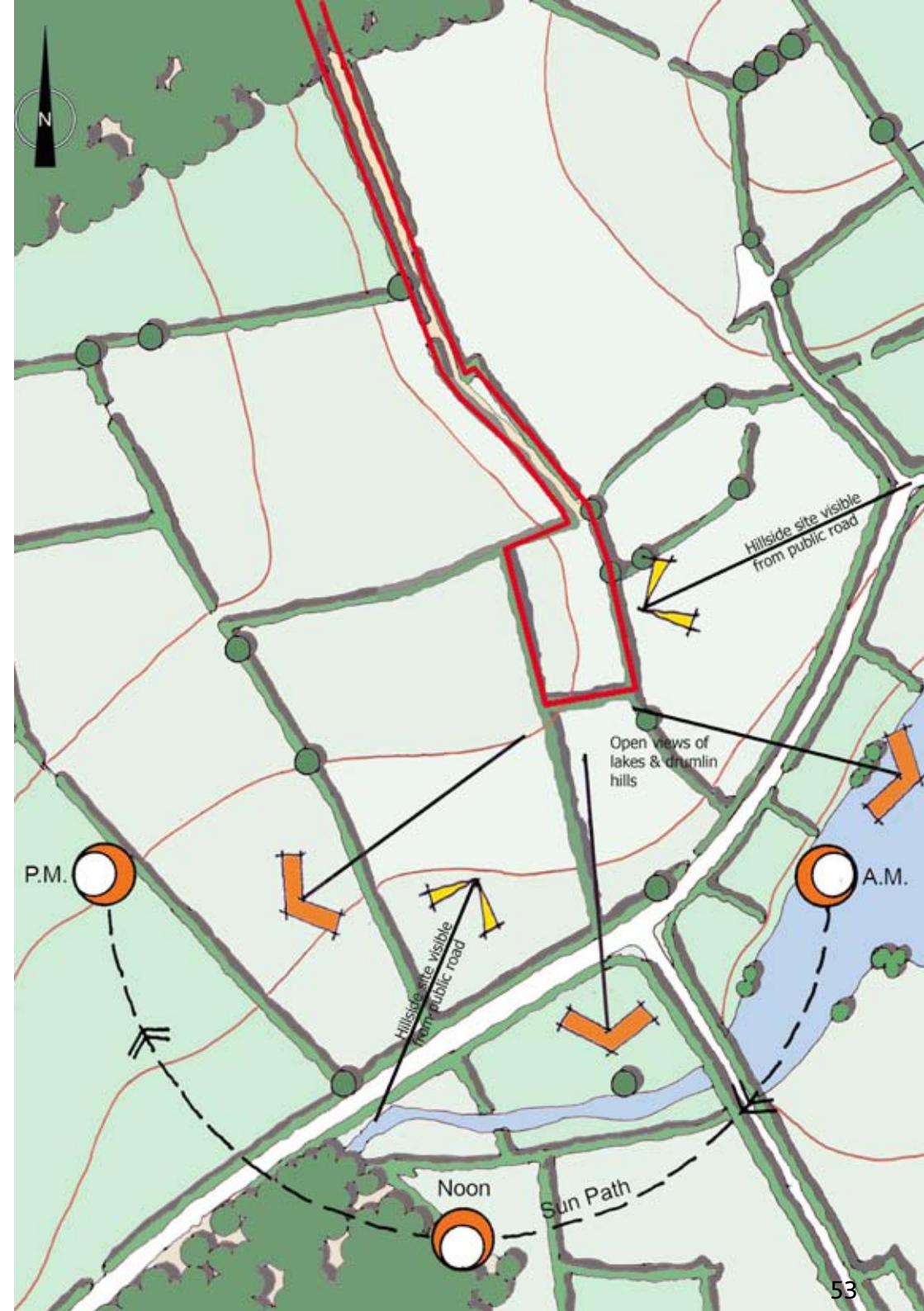
CONTOURS

Work with the natural contours of the site. Avoid large cuts into the hillside to create a level platform. This will result in a scar on the landscape when viewed from afar. No amount of planting can integrate a house and site into the wider landscape in this instance. Building up the natural levels to create a mound or platform is also undesirable. The resulting land formation never appears natural or integrated in the wider landscape.

Linear houses have less visual impact on the wider landscape when they are sited with the long axis of the house at right angles to the contours and step down along the contours. This presents a short gable end façade to the wider landscape. By digging the upper end of the house into the hillside the type of unsightly cutting and filling referred to above is greatly reduced.

By following the natural contours internal floor levels can step down the site. Having regard to the Building Regulations it can offer the opportunity to vary heights within the house making it more interesting. It also helps the relationship between the form and massing of the house in relation to the landscape around it.

Consider breaking down the mass of the house into smaller forms or blocks and design the house so that the ground floor level of these smaller blocks follow the changing levels on the site.



QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INSIDE AND OUTSIDE SPACES

If possible arrange entrance laneways and car-parking areas to the north or east sides of the house. Because of shadows cast by the house itself these areas are unlikely to get enough direct sunlight to be warm enough to use as amenity space (gardens, patios, barbecue terraces).

Arrange carparking, garages, clothes lines and bins so that good views of the wider landscape from main communal rooms such as kitchen, living or dining areas are not blocked by these. Large areas of tarmac and two or three cars located between you inside and whatever pleasant views you may have will detract from your wonderful view.

It is often possible to adapt the size and position of windows to block out a poor view or to ensure privacy inside.



3.4 DEVELOP a design concept

DEVELOP A DESIGN CONCEPT

Having established your own needs and appraised the context of the setting and the site, a “design concept” can be developed. The following steps should be taken:

- Prepare digital land survey showing all topographical features on site
- Prepare outline proposals - These are fairly diagrammatic drawings that show how the design will meet your brief and how it makes the most of the site’s best potential. These proposals should indicate how any site constraints will be overcome.
- A “design concept” should be evident in the outline proposal. This is a kernel of an “idea” for the house. It is about much more than deciding on whether it is single storey or two storey or how the rooms fit together.
- The “idea” or design concept might emerge from something within the site or it may be derived from something beyond the site.
- There can be many different concepts for a particular brief on any given site. The aim is to arrive at the optimum concept for your site and brief. This is a very creative aspect of the design process and a good concept can contribute enormously to the design quality of the new house.

GIVE YOUR AGENT FEEDBACK ON OUTLINE PROPOSALS

This response would confirm whether outline proposals are fully meeting the brief or not. It may highlight things that need to be added to the brief. The brief may be generating a building that will exceed the budget and may need to be trimmed back.

- Prepare sketch design. Agent revises outline proposals to take account of any feedback and develops the design further. Drawings show every aspect of the design - site layout, internal planning, design of all facades, choice of materials and colour.
- Approve sketch design drawings. Pre-planning negotiations should be initiated.







next STEPS.....

NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Shape
- 4.2 Size & Scale
- 4.3 Simplicity
- 4.4 Height
- 4.5 Proportion
- 4.6 Energy/sustainability
- 4.7 Sloping Sites
- 4.8 Houses adjacent to other dwellings

THE BEAUTY OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

Open countryside without buildings is invariably beautiful to observe. Once dwellings and other buildings are added they change the appearance. When these are well designed they blend in well. Many old buildings in the countryside make a positive contribution to the beauty of the rural landscape.

In recent decades the contribution made by many new dwellings and other buildings has detracted from the countryside's natural beauty. When the aesthetic quality of the Co Monaghan countryside deteriorates it becomes less appealing as a place to visit. Apart from having a negative impact on those locals who live and pass through the countryside regularly this has a negative effect on tourism. Ultimately it is the local community that suffers most.

To ensure that the many areas of the county that retain their natural beauty are not damaged by inappropriate house designs it is important to ensure that new houses are well designed so they integrate well and make a positive contribution.

How can this be achieved? Over the course of this chapter we will examine some of the key ingredients that can, if handled well, contribute to high quality design.

We have established that the following factors are crucial to achieving a well designed house that does not detract from the beauty of the countryside:

1. Siting
2. Shape
3. Size & scale
4. Simplicity
5. Height
6. Proportion
7. Materials and colour
8. Details

Additionally, this chapter will examine the issue of energy and sustainability in terms of how this impacts on dwelling design, as well as considering how best to handle sloping sites and the insertion of a new house into an existing group in the countryside.





HENCHION REUTER ARCHITECTS



HENCHION REUTER ARCHITECTS



FRANK O'MAHONY ARCHITECTS

4.1 SHAPE

SHAPE

The traditional shapes or forms that make up the distinctive rural domestic architecture of Co Monaghan are noteworthy for one outstanding quality – their simplicity. While there are many combinations and permutations the sketches opposite illustrate the main basic forms.

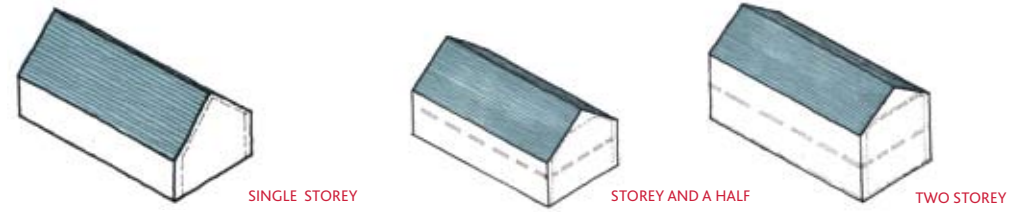
SIMPLICITY

The simplicity of these traditional house shapes is reinforced by the fact that the majority of roofs were unbroken by features such as dormers and rooflights. Where rooflights did occur they were usually very small, in the plane of the roof and there were usually only one or two of them.

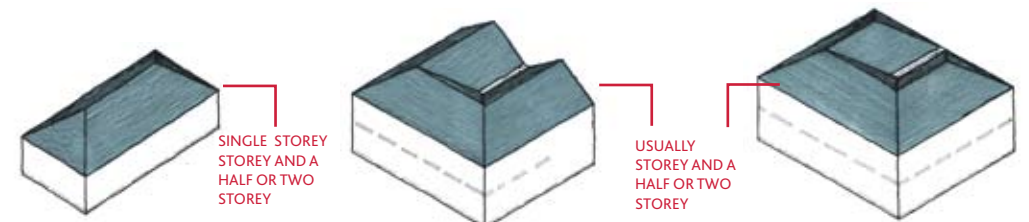
There were also very few elements, if any, projecting from the facades, apart from very simple often flat roofed porches. Simple and uninterrupted roofs and facades can help rural houses and groupings of farm outbuildings to blend into the landscape enormously.

1 FARMHOUSE

Long double pitched block with narrow gable ends



2 SMALL COUNTRY HOUSE

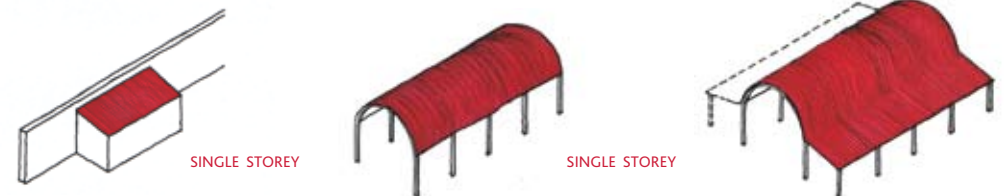


Outbuildings associated with the "Cube" house often have hipped roofs

Traditionally these houses were a combination of two double pitched roofs with a central valley

More often the two double pitched roofs had hips at the rear

3 AGRICULTURAL OUTBUILDINGS



Lean-to shed
(against wall or gable end)

Linear steel framed shed with
curved barrel vaulted roof

Linear steel framed shed
with curved barrel vaulted
roof with one or two lean-
tos added

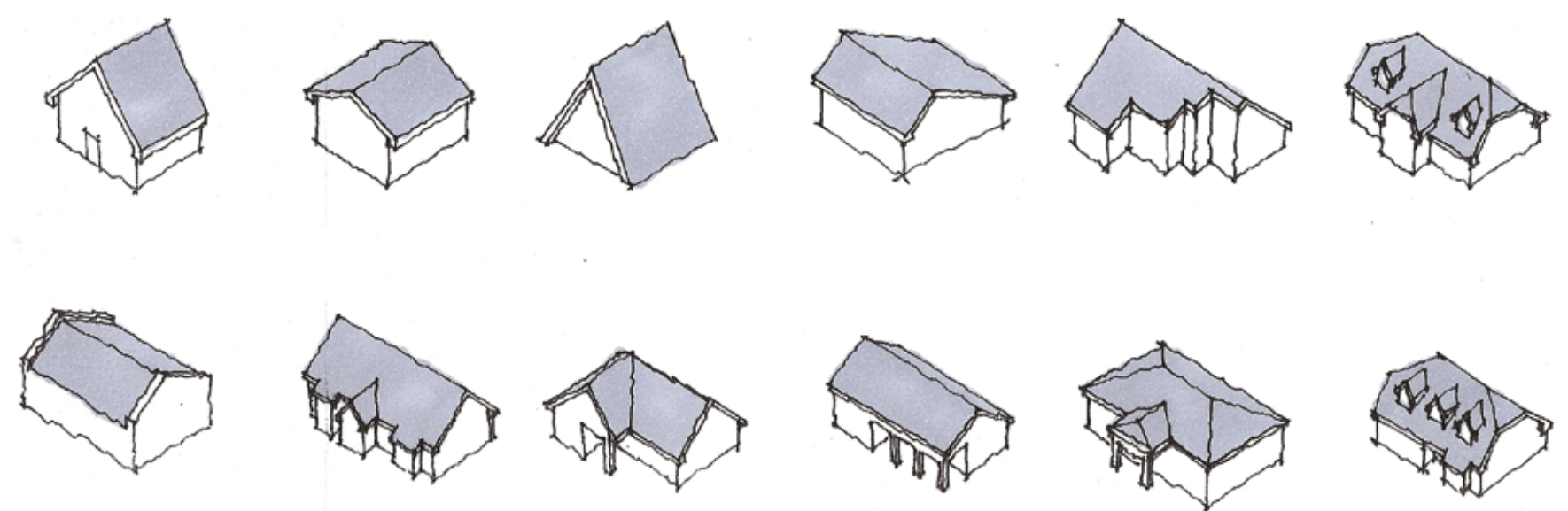


EXAMPLES OF INAPPROPRIATE HOUSES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The examples on these pages illustrate many commonly occurring elements in poorly designed houses in the countryside. They are not definitive and many other combinations and permutations exist. The best way to avoid the pitfalls listed below is to keep things as simple as possible.

AVOID THE FOLLOWING

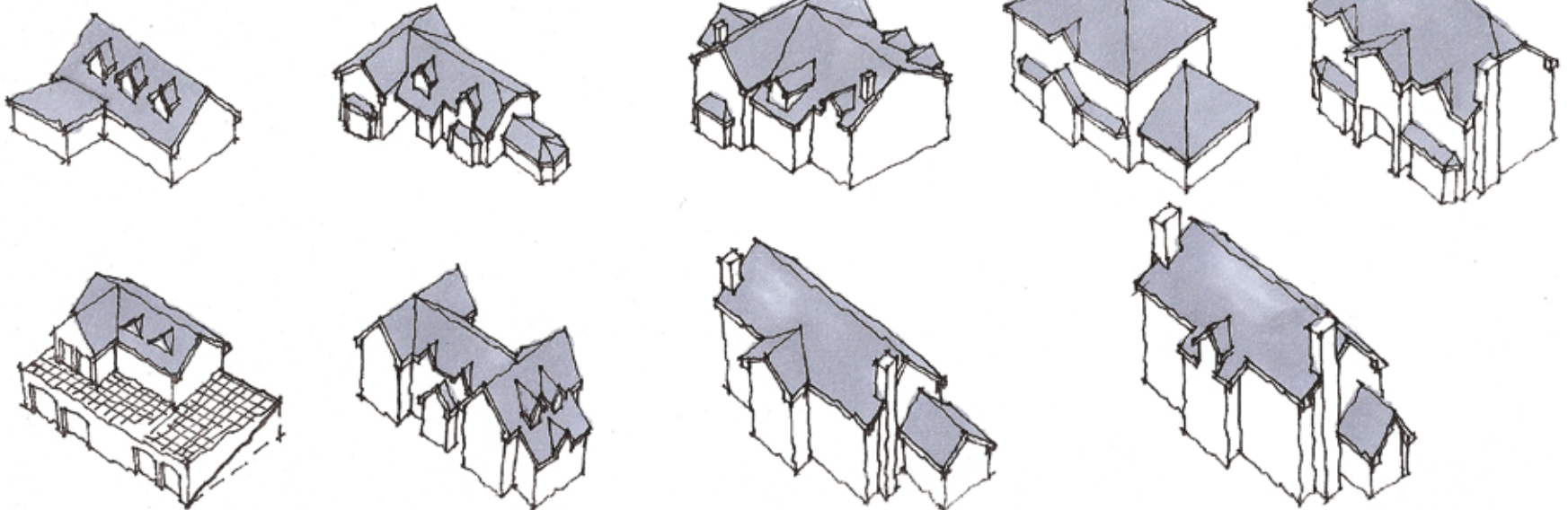
- Dominant roofs
- Complex roof shapes
- Complex house shapes
- Large scale
- Awkward form
- Excessively small scale outshots/extensions relative to the main house form
- Varying lengths of roof planes
- Ridge lines that are excessively high relative to the eaves
- Excessively high eaves lines
- Raised verges – these do not integrate well viewed from afar
- Wide gables – these result in poor proportions
- Mix of gable widths
- Mix of roof pitches
- Half hipped gables





AVOID THE FOLLOWING

- L shaped plan form
- Two storey projecting bay windows and porches
- Dormers at eaves or within the roof – these do not integrate well viewed from afar
- Too many dormers – these make a house look too fussy
- Mixture of dormers within roof and at eaves
- Triangular dormers with no cheeks
- Overhanging fascias and soffits on verges and eaves
- Decorative barge boards and fascias
- Extending main roof plane over bay windows
- Extending bay window roofs beyond plan line of bay
- Excessive mixture of bay windows and roof dormers
- Hipped roofed outshots rising from half hexagonal plan
- More than one or two rooflights
- Large rooflights
- Storey and a half house on a habitable semi-basement plinth
- Chimney breasts that project from gables
- Too many materials
- Synthetic materials (such as concrete brick/stone and PVCu)



4.2 size & SCALE

SIZE AND SCALE

Size and scale do not always mean the same thing. It is possible for something that is small in size to be small in scale but something that is large in size can also be small in scale.

SAME SIZE BUT ONE SMALLER SCALE THAN THE OTHER

The floor area of houses A and B are both approximately 2,000 sq ft and in this regard they are the same size. House B has a larger footprint than House A but is a smaller scale than House A.

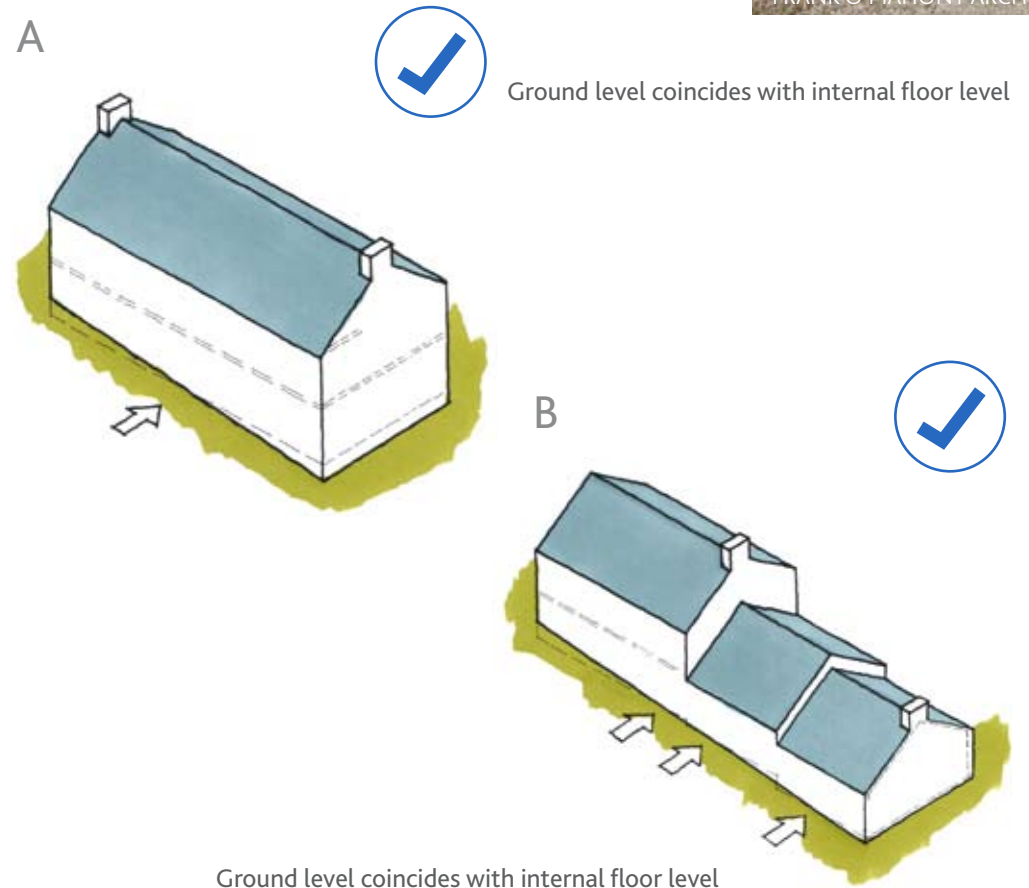
This has been achieved by breaking down the overall linear shape of House A into three smaller shapes that together achieve the same floor area. By joining these three smaller shapes in a way that respects the traditions of Co Monaghan (ie by adding each new shape onto the gable of the previous house shape and also by stepping the floor levels down the hillside) - three things are achieved:

1. House B has a smaller scale. This helps it to blend into the landscape.
2. House B has a more harmonious relationship with the natural slope of the ground.
3. House B strengthens a traditional pattern of rural domestic housing in Co Monaghan.

Many houses in the countryside can be seen from more than one direction depending on road networks, position of neighbouring houses, or when climbing a nearby hillside. It is important to ensure that their scale is controlled and kept relatively small so that they blend in from any viewpoint.



FRANK O'MAHONY ARCHITECTS



LARGE SCALE, LARGE HOUSES

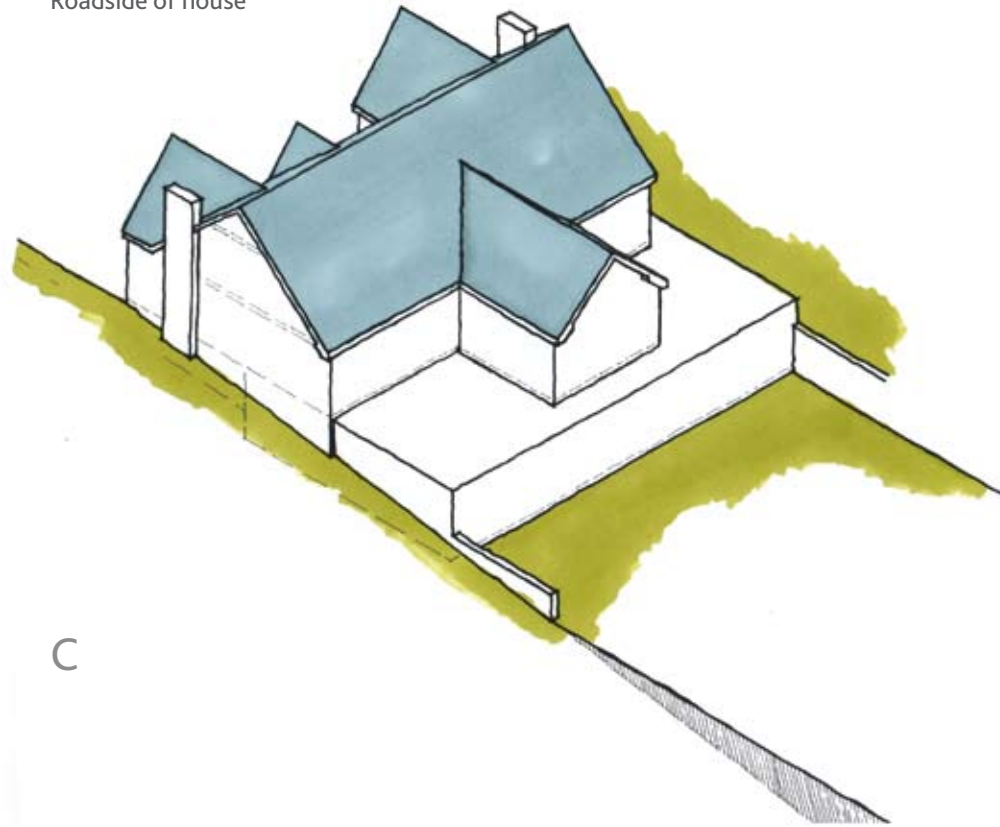
Houses C and D (opposite) are both 6,000 square feet and are on a sloping site.

Viewed from the road House C appears to be single storey but viewed from the rear it is a three storey house. It is large in scale on all sides except the “front” side. Almost half of the entire area of the house is accommodated in a semi basement that gets natural light from one side only. The rooms in the roof space are entirely lit by roof lights and have limited floor space within which to stand up fully. There are three gable projections on the road side and one on the rear side. Natural ground levels have been substantially changed to create a level platform at the rear.

Attempts to make this very large house seem small in scale have not succeeded. It is not well integrated into the natural ground levels or the surrounding countryside and in addition many of its internal rooms have poor spatial quality and natural light.

Although House D has a larger site footprint than House C its scale is considerably smaller. The shape of each block is simple. Roofs are also simple because there is plenty of scope for windows in walls and no need for dormers or rooflights. This also helps to save money by reducing (or even eliminating) complicated flashings and cutting roof timbers around dormers and rooflights.

Roadside of house





SMALL SCALE, LARGE HOUSES

Large houses can:

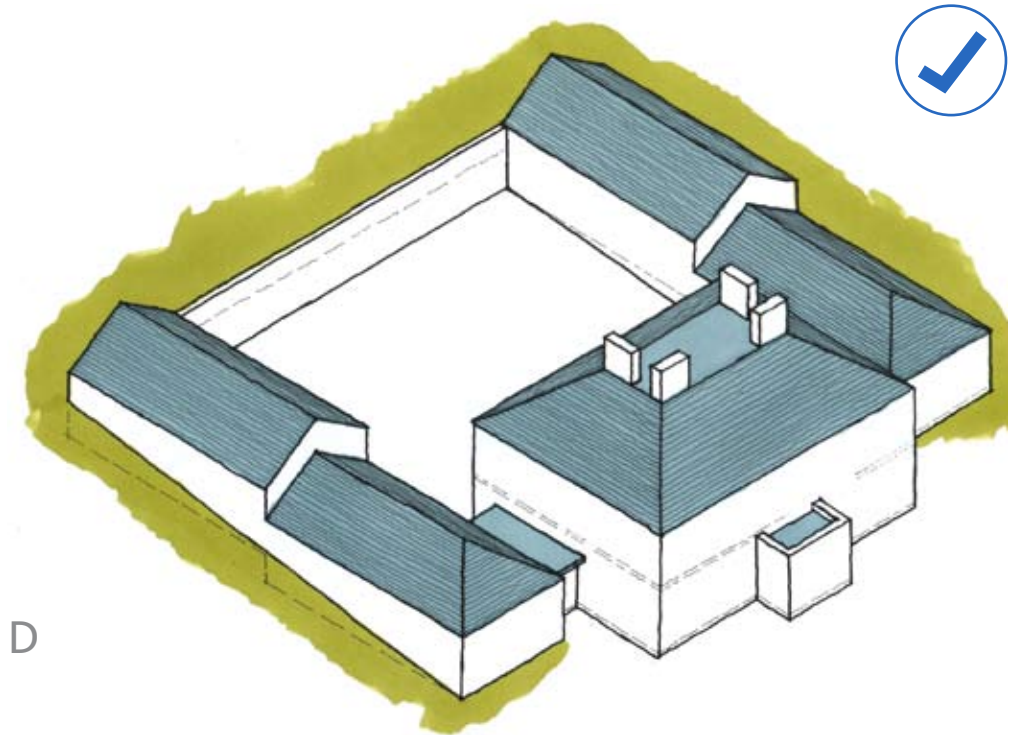
- be small scale when viewed from every angle
- have sufficient level ground (even on sloping sites) to allow access and natural light into main rooms and bedrooms without spending a lot of money in constructing expensive platforms on top of existing contours



HOW TO MAKE LARGE HOUSES SMALL IN SCALE

The clues for how to achieve this lie in the traditional pattern of the small country house or 'Glebe'. The main house (modest in size) was usually a very simple "cube" with a hipped roof flanked by long outbuildings forming one, two or three sides of a yard to the rear of the main house.

Historically these outbuildings usually housed farm machinery or horses but today there is no reason why a similar layout might not house secondary rooms such as garages, games rooms, dens for teenagers, studies, guest bedrooms, work spaces, storage etc.



By sinking the enclosing "outbuildings" down into a sloping site it is possible to have a relatively level courtyard and access to all the "outbuildings" from within the courtyard. When viewed from outside the grouping the outbuildings appear to be low lying and hug the natural ground while the main house has considerable presence and is allowed to 'reign supreme'.

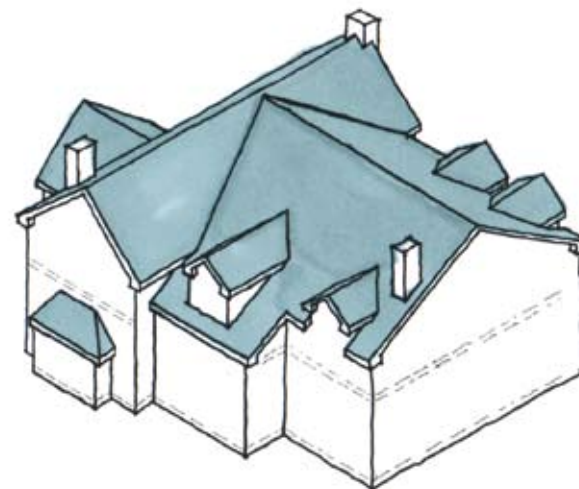
This arrangement improves sheltered external spaces both within the courtyard itself and on the two sides of the main house. Shelter can be increased by extensive tree planting of native broadleaf trees (such as oak, beech and ash) around the perimeter of the outbuildings. This is also an essential last step to help blend a significant grouping of buildings into the surrounding countryside.

4.3 SIMPLICITY

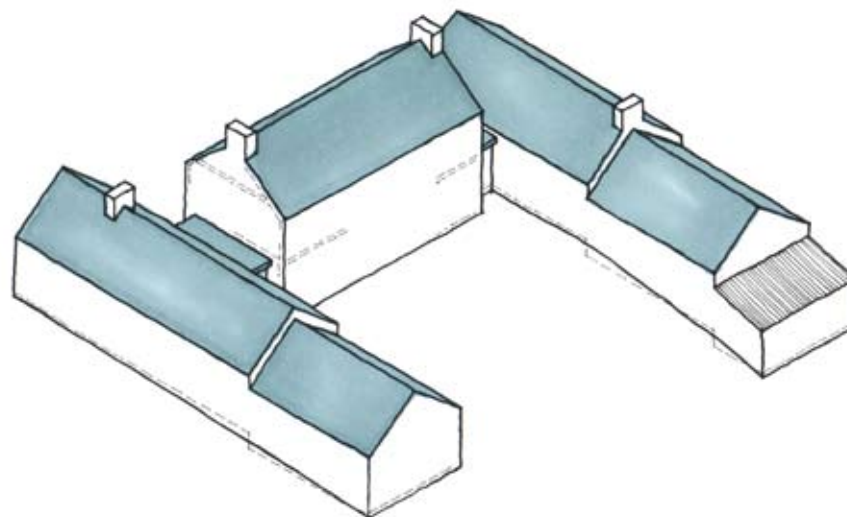
Increasingly larger and larger homes are being built in the Co Monaghan countryside. Often efforts to shoe-horn very large floor areas such as 3,000 sq ft, 4,000 sq ft or 5,000 sq ft into very compact storey and a half houses with dormer windows results in complex and awkwardly shaped houses. As houses increase in size dormers are also becoming much bigger and more numerous. These can be visually obtrusive when viewed from a distance. Too often the overall result is a house that does not blend in.

There is already a historical precedent for large rural houses and we can find lessons in these to guide an approach to designing large houses today so that they are a positive contribution to the natural beauty of the countryside. This does not mean that new houses have to mimic something from the 18th or 19th century. In skilled hands it is quite possible for these lessons to be translated into new houses that are contemporary without losing the simplicity and appropriate scale of their ancestors.

The illustrations show two approaches to reworking a typical complex 4,000sq foot 21st Century House by breaking it down into simpler shapes and as result also reducing the scale. Further examples show how the same approaches can be adapted to suit other floor areas.

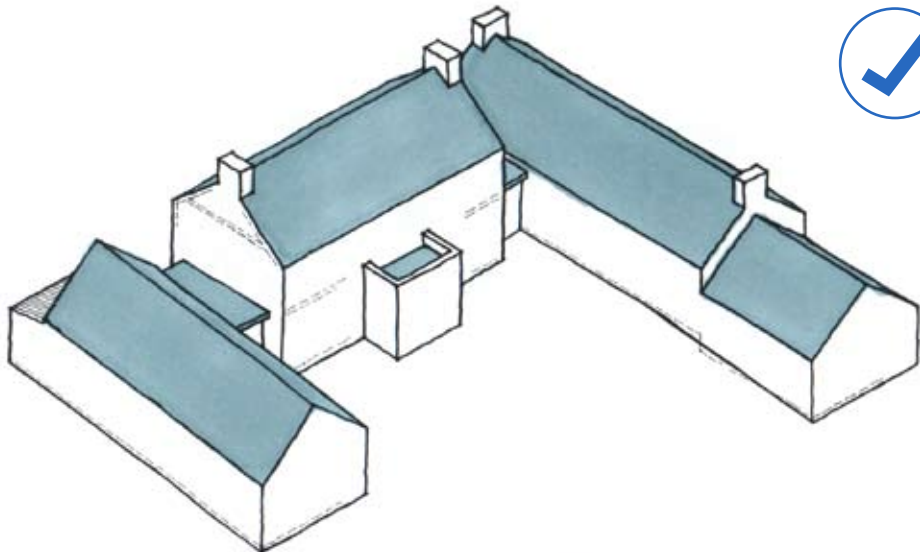


Typical 21st Century House (4,000 sq ft excl. garage)

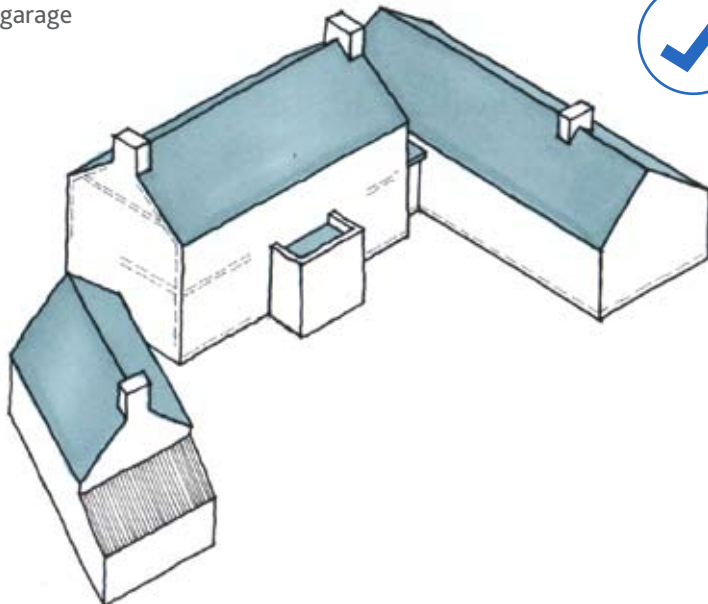


4,000 sq ft excl. garage

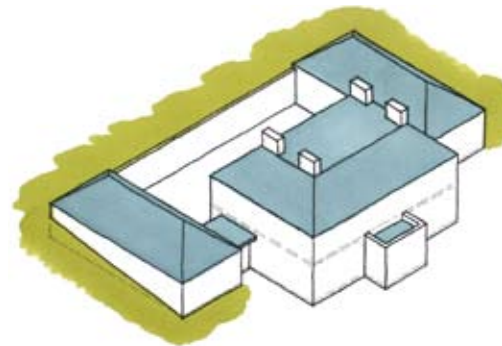
Grouping on sloping site draws on the traditional pattern of a simple two storey farmhouse with adjoining simple linear single storey farm sheds and forecourt to front of house



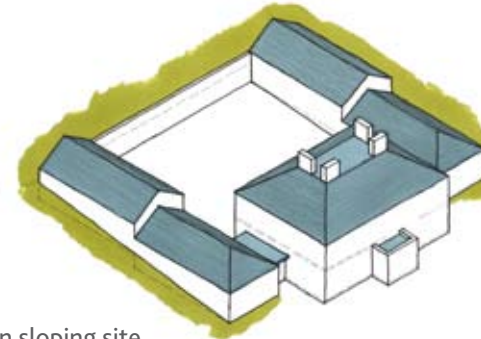
3,000 sq ft + double garage



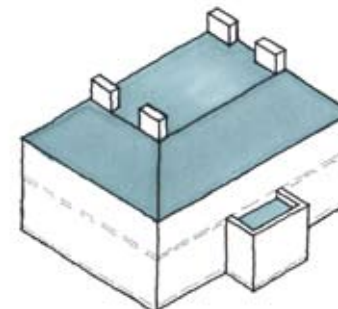
2,000 sq ft L shaped house grouping + freestanding double garage with a lean-to shed



4,000 sq ft This approach draws on the traditional pattern of small "cube" country house and enclosed sheltered, private courtyard to the rear. The grouping sinks into the sloping site.



5,000 sq ft on sloping site



2,700 sq ft house with a simple flat roofed porch. This allows the windows to run through uninterrupted on the first floor



4.4 HEIGHT



Part of the charm of traditional houses lies in their small size, distinctive shapes and their proportions. It can often be difficult to retain these characteristics when accommodating modern space standards and Building Regulations.

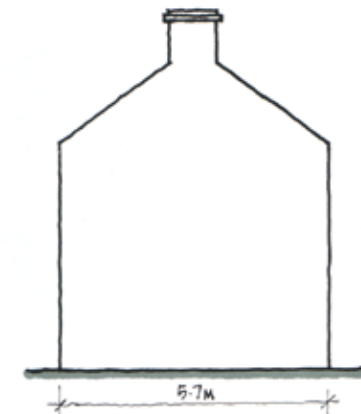
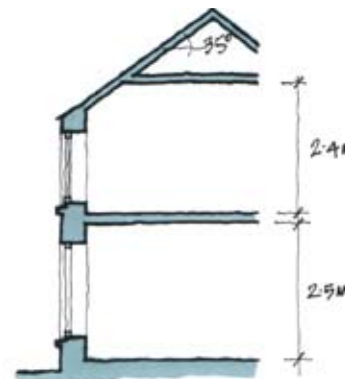
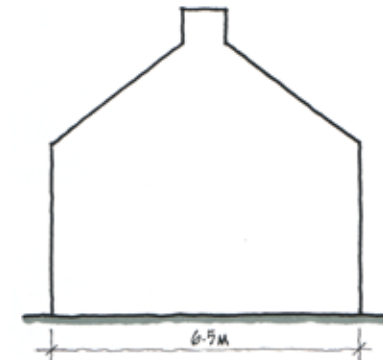
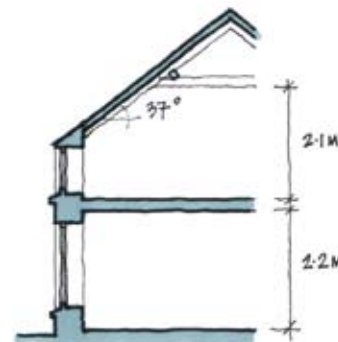
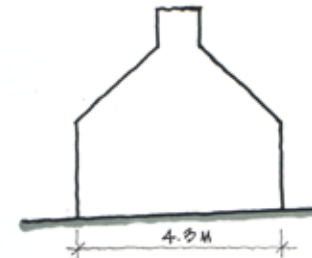
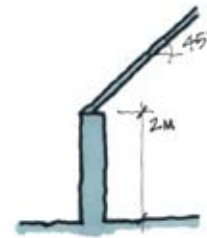
Roof pitches on traditional houses usually ranged from between 35° to 45° . This last pitch often resulted from a previous thatched covering which was laid at this steeper pitch to help rainwater run off quickly. Leantos were usually at a shallower pitch.

Single storey blocks allow great scope in higher floor to ceiling heights because the ceiling can follow the underside of the roof partially or fully. Where possible keep floor to ceiling heights to 2.4m on both floors.

Today eaves heights are often kept very low by relying on dormer windows and rooflights to bring in natural light. But these make roofs look overly complex compared to the traditional.

Allowing ceilings to slope within rooms to a minimum height of 2.1m allows for windows in the walls rather than the roof.

TRADITIONAL HOUSES - TYPICAL GABLE WIDTHS AND FLOOR HEIGHTS



ACHIEVING AN ACCEPTABLE MARRIAGE BETWEEN THE BEST OF THE OLD AND THE NEW

Fixed panes of glass (provided safety glass is used) at low level allows for lower cills at first floor windows while still complying with the Building Regulations. This allows more light into first floor rooms. Skill is required to refine the window proportions.

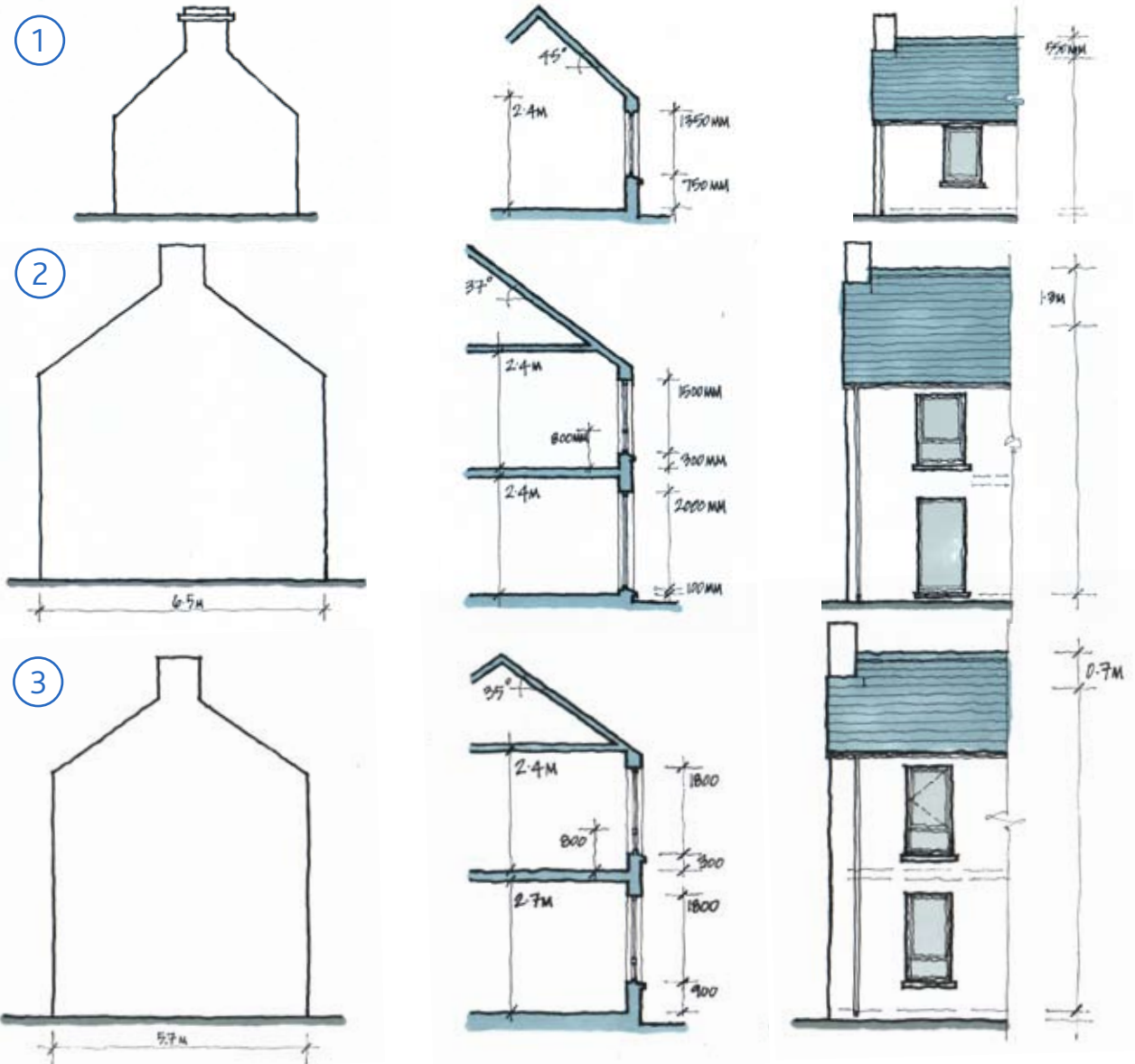
Keep the overall gable width as narrow as possible to minimise ridge heights.

Gables should be no wider than 7m (two storey) and 6m (single storey) to avoid two negative effects:

- excessive ridge heights
- losing pleasing proportions of vernacular gables

In example 3 although the ground floor to ceiling height has been increased to 2.7m (to improve the spatial quality of large rooms) and the first floor rooms are 2.4m high throughout the narrow gable width of 5.7m means the ridge height increases by a mere 0.7m. Compare this to example 2 where the 6.5 wide gable results in an increased ridge height of 1.3 despite the fact that it has lower floor to ceiling heights on both floors.

TRADITIONAL HOUSES GABLE WIDTHS COMBINED WITH MODERN FLOOR TO CEILING HEIGHTS



4.5 PROPORTION

“Proportion” is an extremely difficult notion to explain. Achieving a well-proportioned building is even more difficult. Good proportion is about achieving visually pleasing relationships between the different parts of a building and the overall whole. This applies to the overall shape as well as its constituent parts – roof, facades, chimneys, windows and doors etc. The composition of these elements relative to each other is also critical to achieving overall success.

If the house is well proportioned the composition of window, door and chimney shapes within the overall house shape will look good.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Is there a good visual relationship between the height and the width of a façade?
- Is there a good visual relationship between the height of the roof compared to the height of the façade?

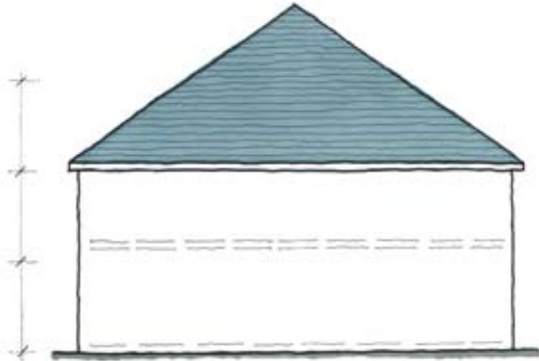
An architect will consider various things when working on proportion. To help explain these the following examples illustrate some typical steps that an architect might go through to refine the proportions of the front façade of the traditional hipped roof ‘Glebe’ or small country house. The sketches illustrated are simplified in terms of the work and judgement involved in arriving

at a well proportioned façade even for a simple form such as this.

Ultimately achieving a successful outcome lies in the architect’s hands and depends very much on his or her innate skill and flair in this area.



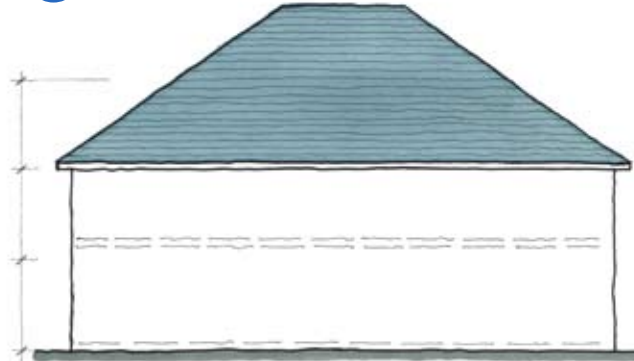
1



- Pyramidal roof is aesthetically poor
- Too dominant and heavy
- Ridge is too high
- Overhanging eaves is visually crude



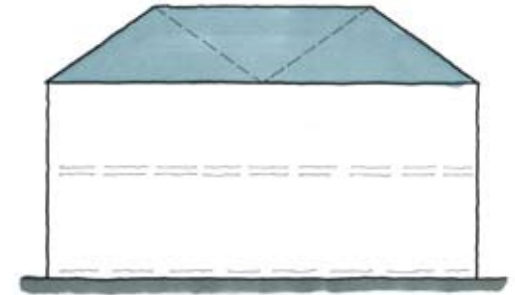
2



- Ridge line much too high
- Length of ridge too short
- Roof too dominant
- Overhanging eaves is visually crude



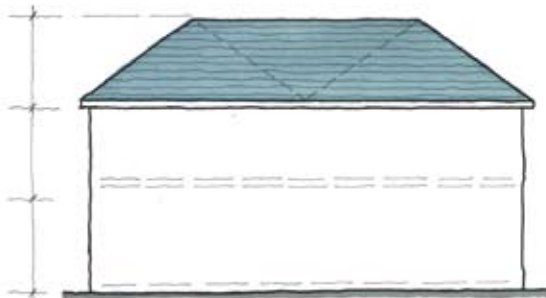
3



- Removing the overhanging eaves helps reduce height of roof and achieves a much better roof proportion but the façade looks squat because it is too high compared to its length



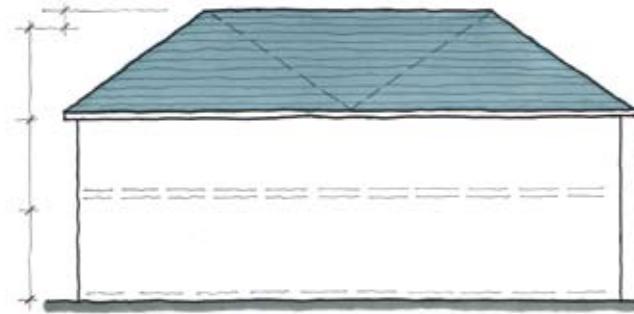
4



- Roof proportion is much better but overhanging eaves still makes roof look heavy



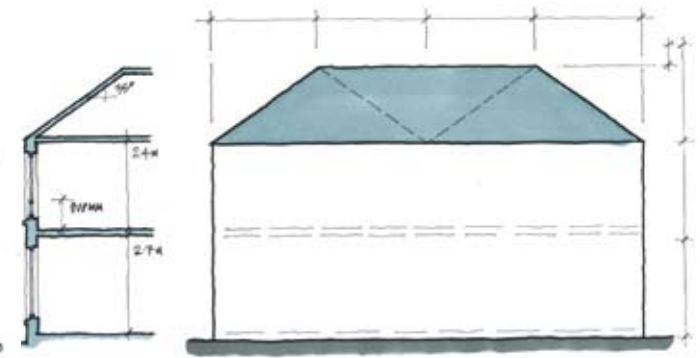
5



- Roof still looks heavy
- Wall is very long relative to the ground to eaves height



6



- Roof and wall proportions good
- Eaves to ridge height is less than half the wall height



Country houses of this type were usually finished as smooth or roughcast plaster, either painted or unpainted. A roof with no overhanging eaves or fascia boards suits this material finish but could look awkward on a similar house built in brick or fine ashlar stone. Traditionally small country houses of this type were not built in brick in Co. Monaghan.

The judgement of a highly skilled architect is crucial when making decisions about how to handle such details as the eaves. The overall appearance of the house will suffer if the wrong judgement is made.

PORCHES

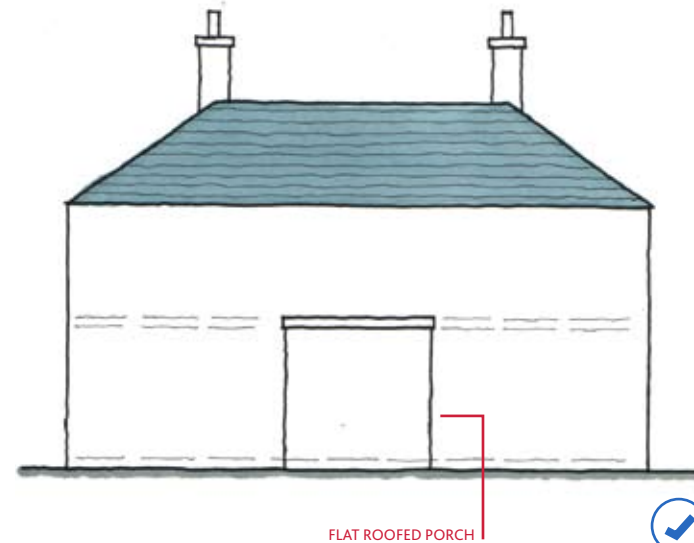
The next things to be considered are the porch (if there is one) and the height and position of chimneys. If the proportions for these are not pleasing they will detract from the overall look of the façade.

In this type of house the porch was usually a very simple box stuck onto the front wall. It usually had a flat roof because this allowed the first floor windows to run through uninterrupted. Porches that are too big exert too much dominance on the facade. When they are too small they will be lost and lack presence.

CHIMNEYS

Chimneys on this type of house usually straddled the ridge and were much taller than the average linear farmhouse. This extra height makes a significant difference to the overall proportion of the house. If these chimneys are too short they will make the house look squat. Chimneys that are too narrow or too tall can be visually displeasing. Either (or any of these) will have a negative impact on the overall proportions of this type of house.

7





WINDOWS AND DOORS

Next (and perhaps the most difficult thing of all) is to decide on the proportions and composition of the windows and doors. Achieving good proportions in these elements is a task for your architect or agent. No one else can deliver well proportions. When he or she is working on this aspect of the design they need to consider the following:

- Window and door shapes (height and width) should be appropriate for their function and be a visually pleasing grouping within the composition of the overall façade as well as visually pleasing in themselves.
- Each window or door should have be of a size that is visually pleasing relative to the surrounding solid masonry – not too big and not too small
- Framing divisions (mullions and transoms) should be carefully designed to achieve well-proportioned panes of glass. When the subdivision of framing is aesthetically poor this can undermine an otherwise well proportioned building. Avoid sandwiching mullions between panes of double glazing.
- Where different window shapes and frames occur make sure that these complement each other visually.



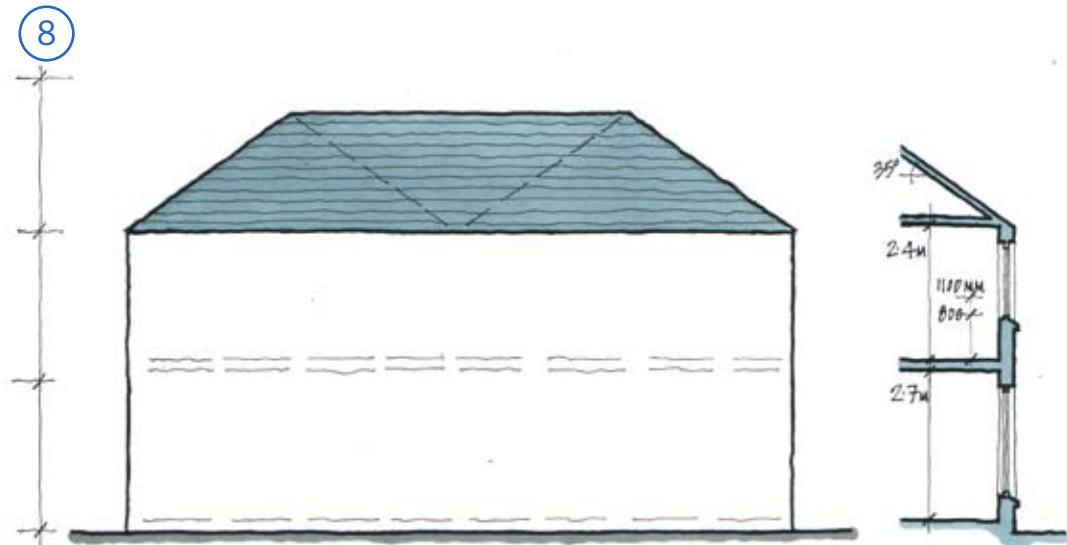


The traditional valley gutter to the rear of 'Glebe' houses often caused construction defects. This has been eliminated to avoid this by forming a flat roof over the central portion and allowing the ridge to run continuously around the roof.

Flat roofs that are well detailed and finished in a high quality material (such as lead) are very durable and can look very well. This solution should not be attempted with low quality materials such as mineral felt or butyl rubber. In this approach chimneys are best re-positioned at the edge of the flat roof (rather than straddling the pitched and flat roofs)

WINDOWS

In sketch 9 ground floor windows are a pleasing proportion made up of a double square but the first floor windows are not so good and there are difficulties with the cill height required by the Building Regulations for escape windows. Window proportions are pleasing for both ground and first floor windows but the ratio of window to wall area is uncomfortable. These windows are too big for their façade.



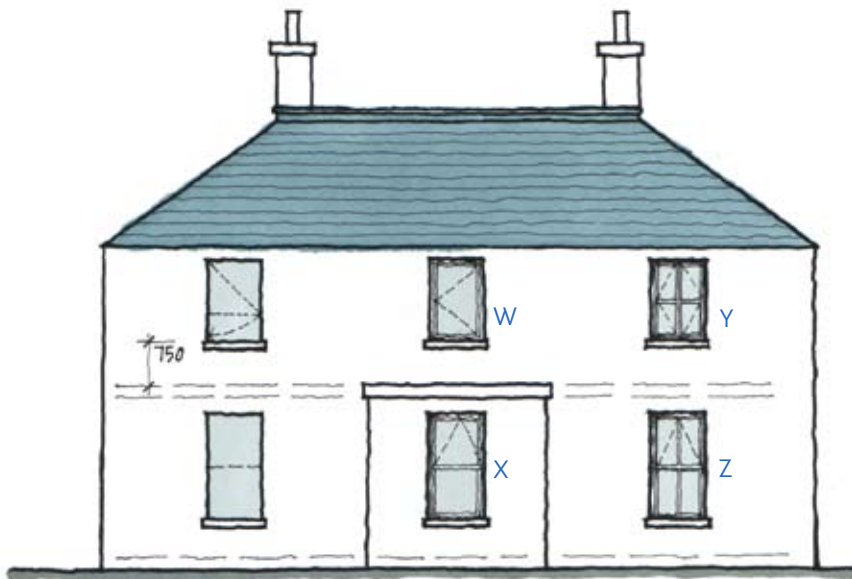
10



12



11



In sketch 11 ground and first floor windows are both well proportioned but they are quite small relative to the overall façade and make the house look “mean”. First floor escape windows demand side hung opening lights. This necessitates either window frame W or Y. Frame W looks incongruous against Frame X below while the proportions of glass panes in Frame Y and Z are slightly out of sync.

In sketch 12 a decision to try square proportioned windows on the first floor has helped solve the problem. This was combined with taller ground floor windows that are one and a half times taller than they are wide. This allows side hung casement windows on both floors with framing divisions that are similar on both floors. The 900mm cill height on the first floor complies with the Building Regulations for escape windows. Although there is a lot of wall between the cill of the first floor windows and the head of the ground floor windows this looks fine.

OTHER ELEMENTS AND DETAILS

BOUNDARY WALLS

- appropriate local natural rubble stone boundary wall
- short lengths of wall close to houses are acceptable in painted plaster with insitu concrete copings (avoid pre-cast concrete copings). Long stretches of these walls can be unsightly.



DOORS

- back doors were usually vertically boarded tongued and grooved painted timber
- front doors were sometimes the same as back doors or framed and quarter panelled in painted timber



CILLS

- traditionally cills were carved from natural stone (often sandstone). They were relatively chunky in appearance and had a pencil round on the arrises (corners).
- over time they were often painted.
- avoid pre-cast concrete cills and thresholds.
- insitu concrete is the preferable modern equivalent if the budget won't stretch to sandstone.



CHIMNEYS

- chimneys are best centred on the ridge
- keep the outer line of the chimney stack flush with the gable
- the width is best between 450 – 600 mm wide
- the length of chimney stack should be noticeably longer than the width
- copings look best when they are quite deep eg 100 – 150 mm.



EAVES, GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES

The details of eaves, gutters, downpipes and verges at farmhouses and classical Glebe houses were simple and shared the following characteristics:

- half round gutter profile and circular section downpipes (cast iron or cast aluminium is preferred – avoid PVCu and extruded aluminium)
- L shaped rise and fall brackets to support gutters
- avoid timber or PVCu fascias/soffit boards – these create crude eaves details



KEEP MODERN DETAILING SIMPLE

The simplicity that is evident in many old farmhouses can be given a contemporary expression in 21st century dwellings without loss of simplicity or resorting to pastiche.

Consider:

- high specification painted timber windows
- painted metal cills
- self finish render in muted tones (greys, beige, fawn etc)
- half round cast aluminium gutters supported on bracket fixed to rafters eliminates the need for overhanging fascia boards and overhanging soffits
- plastering gables right up to underside of slates along verges – this looks simple and visually effective
- avoiding PVCu soffit, fascia and verge trims



4.5 energy/SUSTAINABILITY

There are a number of questions to be asked relative to sustainability and energy consumption when considering the preparation of a brief and the selection of a site. These issues need to be explored in even greater detail when developing a design concept and final design as there a range of steps that can be taken to maximise efficiency and minimise energy consumption through a considered approach to siting, orientation, design and layout. The aim is to minimise consumption of energy and resources.

A large house will require more energy to heat and cool it. But if the house is bigger than necessary then it takes a lot more energy to run it and make it comfortable. All of this increases the energy load both in terms of actual fuel consumption used by the household but also during fabrication and transportation of the materials used in the construction of the building and fittings be they toilets, concrete roof tiles, showers or solar panels.

To live in a more sustainable way identify the minimum size of house that will meet living requirements and then design the house to minimise consumption of energy resources. Could a study or den be big enough to take a sofa bed and turn into a spare bedroom when guests arrive? Is the extra en suite really essential?

How do we reduce our consumption of energy and resources?

- Reduce the house to the minimum size required to meet day to day needs
- Make the shape of the house as compact as possible
- Insulate the enclosing envelope (walls, roof, floor and windows) to a high degree

PASSIVE SOLAR HEATING

The sun is free energy. The effective capture of this inside the house by making much greater use of passive solar design will reduce consumption of fossil fuels. This is the energy saving strategy that has most to offer under Irish climatic conditions. It depends, for its success, on the shape of the building, the materials it is made from, the size and position of windows – and especially the levels of insulation in the walls, floor, roof and windows.

The Direct Gain system is the most effective passive solar method in Ireland's climate. In this approach solar gain is maximised by positioning the larger windows on the south and west sides of the house and deliberately making window openings as small as possible on the north side of the house.

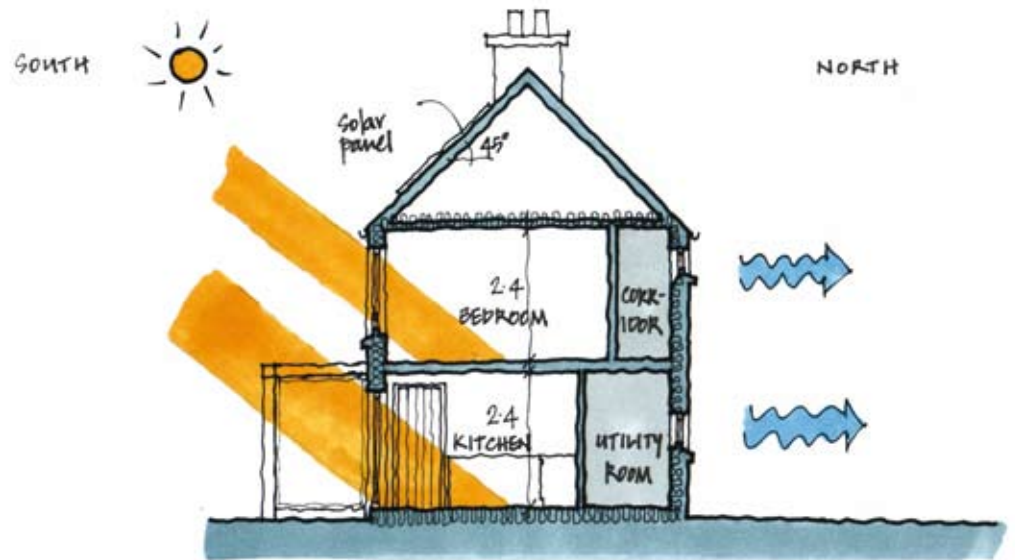
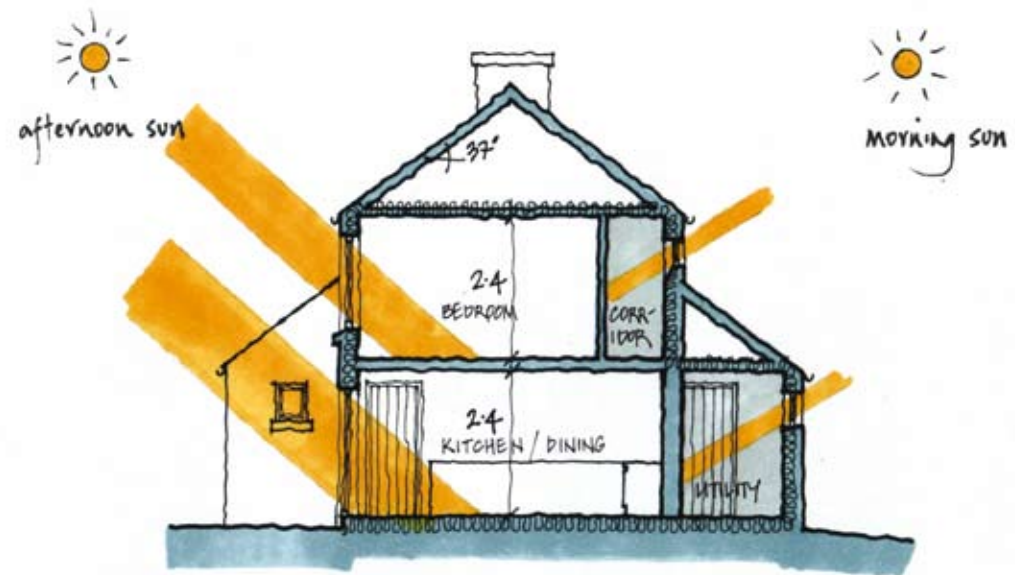


Sometimes the shape of the site, its contours or other factors may mean that it is not always possible to orient the house so that all the most frequently used rooms eg kitchen/living/dining and family rooms are on the south side of the house. When this is the case move these rooms so that they have at least one external wall facing south and/or west. Ideally these rooms should have two external walls with a south and west aspect.

Position little used rooms such as bathrooms, utility rooms, stores or corridors on the north side of the house. These act as a buffer helping to reduce heat loss from the rooms used most often in daytime (kitchen, dining, living rooms).

Well insulated buildings with large areas of south or west facing glazing can be vulnerable to overheating in summer. In a passive solar building good window design, appropriate shading, natural cooling devices and sensible control systems will all be needed to maintain a comfortable balance.

Solar panels and evacuated tube solar collectors (for heating) are most effective when they are placed at an angle of 45° and face due south. This can be difficult to achieve when other important factors call for an orientation and roof pitch that deviates from this. In addition sunlight reflecting off a roof that is peppered with solar panels will stand out visually making it difficult to blend into the surrounding countryside. Consideration should be given to locating such elements on the ground at the appropriate angle and orientation.



ORIENTATION

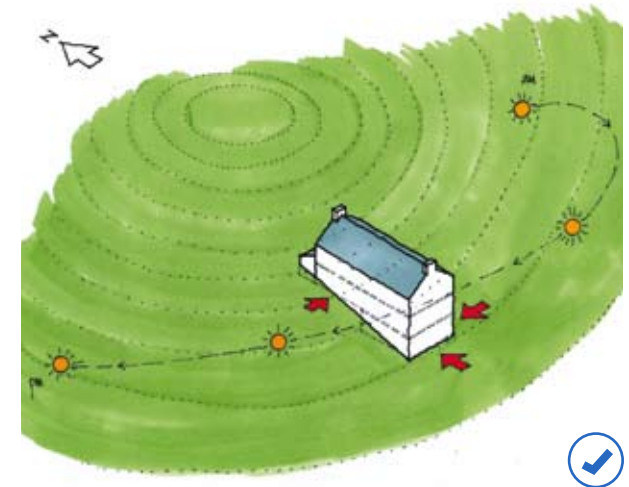
There can often be a conflict between achieving an orientation for the house that suits the landscape setting and one that is best for passive solar gain.

For instance a narrow plan house that has one long façade facing due south will be very good for maximising solar gain into the rooms on this side of the house provided there is a buffer of less important rooms on the north side. But on a south facing steeply sloping site placing a very long narrow house parallel to the contours could result in a large amount of unsightly excavation. It could mean that such a house would be poorly integrated into its landscape setting.

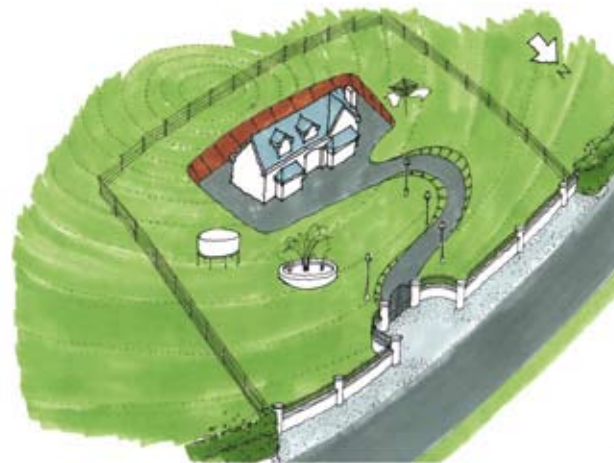
Very long narrow houses on sloping sites can often be better integrated visually when the long axis of the house is at right angles to the contours and the house is allowed to step down the site. Where this is the case a balance must be struck between an appropriate form, well positioned in a particular landscape and optimising passive solar gain.



Narrow plan house with long south facing facade



Three storey house with long axis at a right angle to contours



Long house parallel to contours resulting in unsightly excavation



Modestly sized two storey house with long axis at a right angle to contours

Even when the topography of the landscape favours a narrow house positioned at right angles to the contours and results in a very short gable façade facing south the Direct Gain method of passive solar gain can still be used to considerable effect. Essentially the principles described above still apply even though it is not possible to give all the most used rooms a south facing external wall.

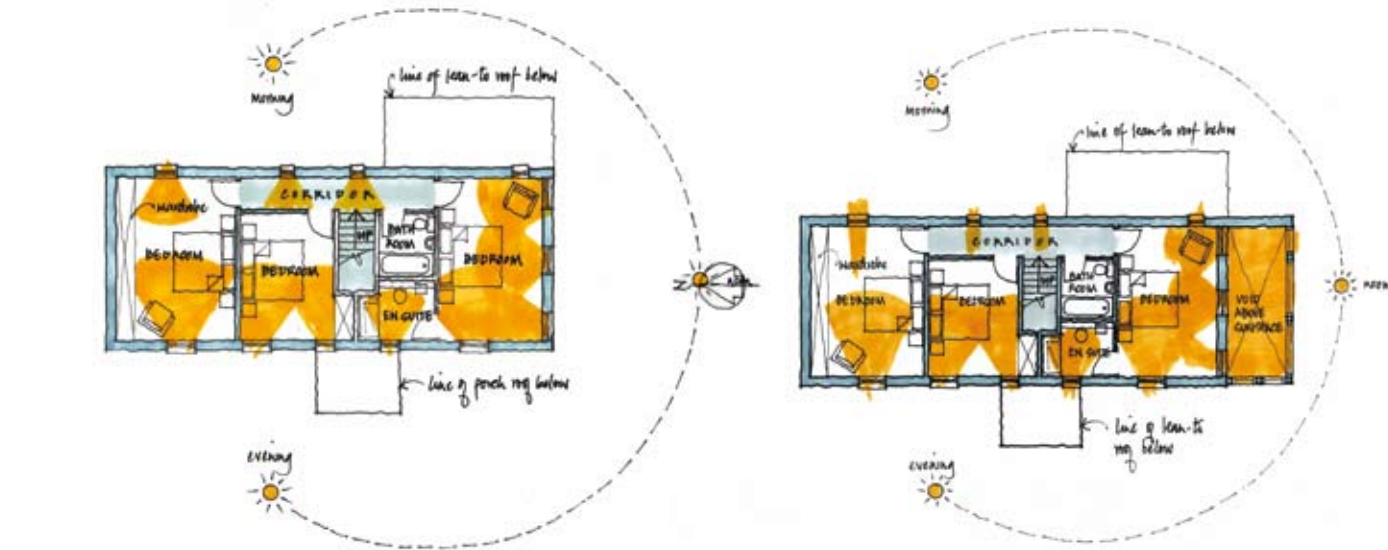
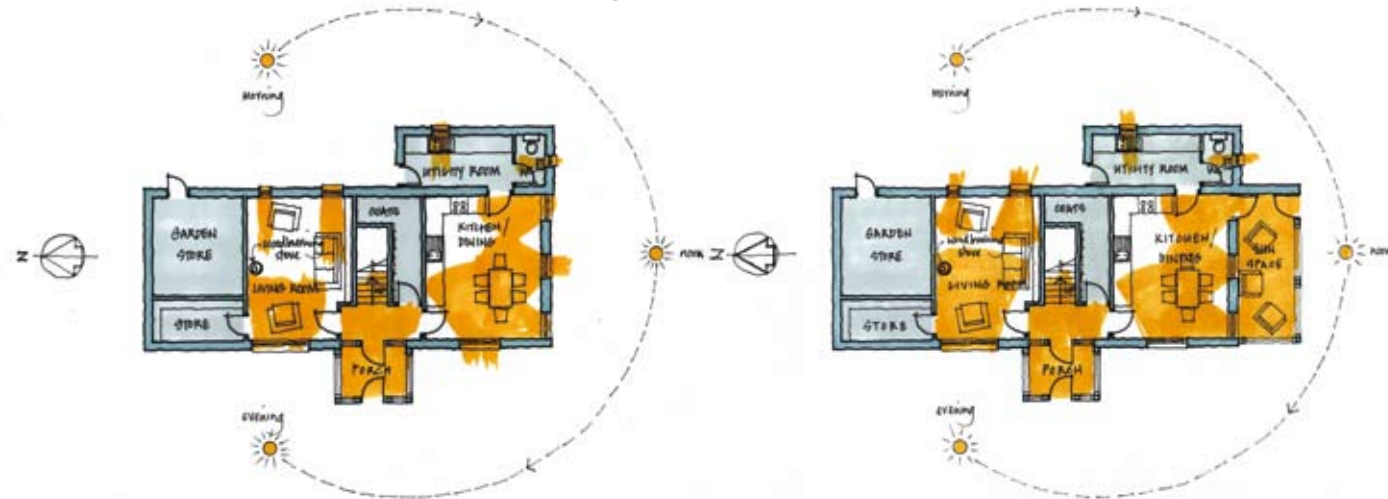
Position the most used rooms to take advantage of whatever south facing wall frontage you have. An open plan kitchen/dining/living area can be arranged to have windows on south, west and east facades thus benefiting from solar gain throughout the day.

A separate living room is likely to be used most in the early evening. If this is the case then it is best to position this room so that it benefits from solar gain when it is being used. Often a west facing position is best for this room.

Secondary rooms such as stores, utility rooms, bathrooms, corridors etc can be positioned on the north and perhaps the east side of the house to act as a heat loss buffer.

Conservatories or sunspaces can add to the passive solar gain provided they are positioned on the south or southwest sides of the house. A conservatory on the north side of a house will be less attractive to use because it won't have good solar gain.

Position most used rooms to benefit from south facing walls



Position living rooms/bedrooms rooms to benefit from early evening sun

4.7 sloping SITES

Sloping sites present particular design challenges and require a sensitive approach to siting and building design.

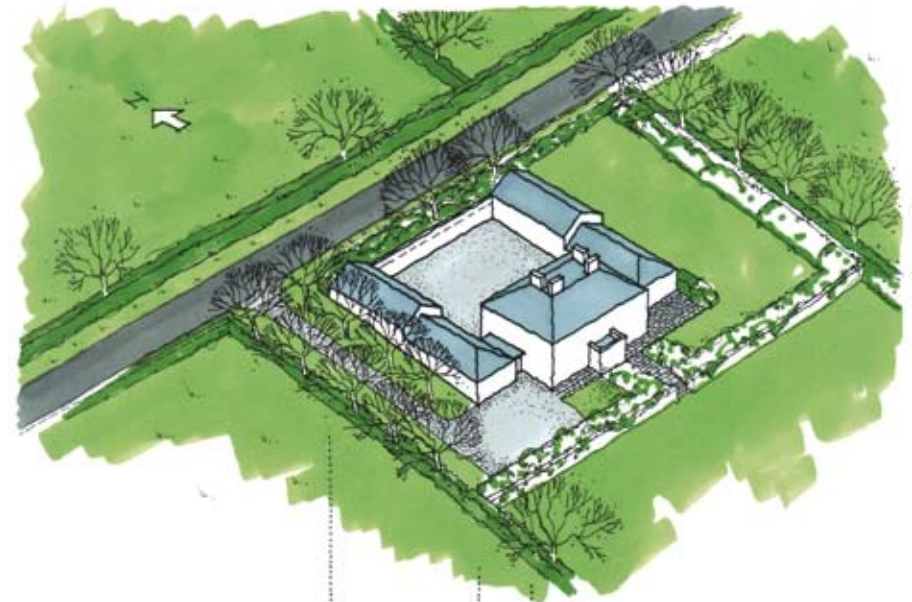
- Work with the natural undulations of the site as much as possible to limit excavation and under building
- If the house is sited parallel to the contours keep it as narrow as possible to minimise large scale excavation or extensive cut and fill.
- Site the house so that it is well down the hillside
- Do not allow the roof to break the skyline when the house and site are viewed from a long distance away or from any approach roads.
- Where possible allow the natural ground levels to wrap around the house
- Very large houses (greater than 2000 square feet) should be broken down into smaller blocks
- Low lying sites or hollows can present drainage and flooding problems
- Avoid sloping sites that face north



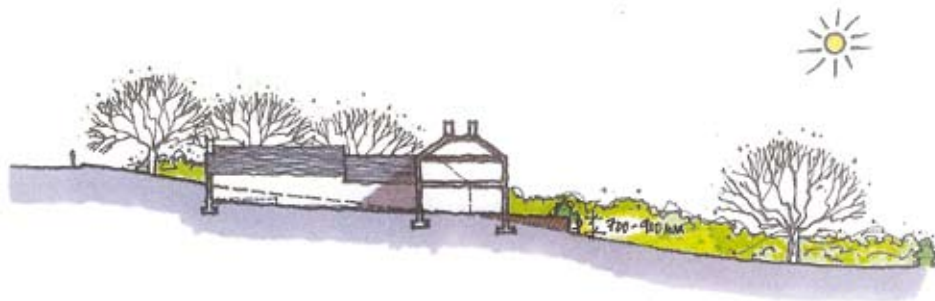
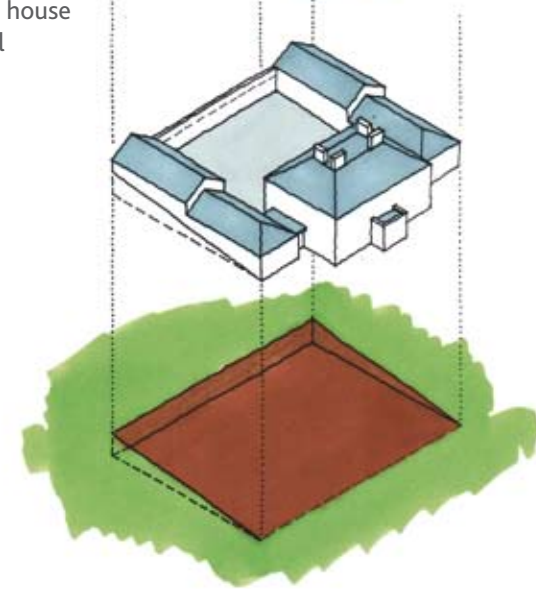


HOW DOES THIS EXAMPLE BLEND IN?

- Its scale has been made smaller by subdividing the accommodation into one simple central block with the rest of the living space accommodated in adjoining linear buildings deliberately grouped to create a courtyard.
- Sinking the grouping into a shallow excavation in the hillside a sheltered, enclosed and private courtyard is created that can hide clothes lines, trampolines etc, bins etc.
- Allowing the natural ground levels to wrap around the perimeter buildings makes the grouping seem to hug the landscape.
- Planting of indigenous broadleaf trees along the boundaries is an essential ingredient in enhancing the harmonisation with the countryside.



A large 6,000 sqft house that blends in well



BACK AND FRONT

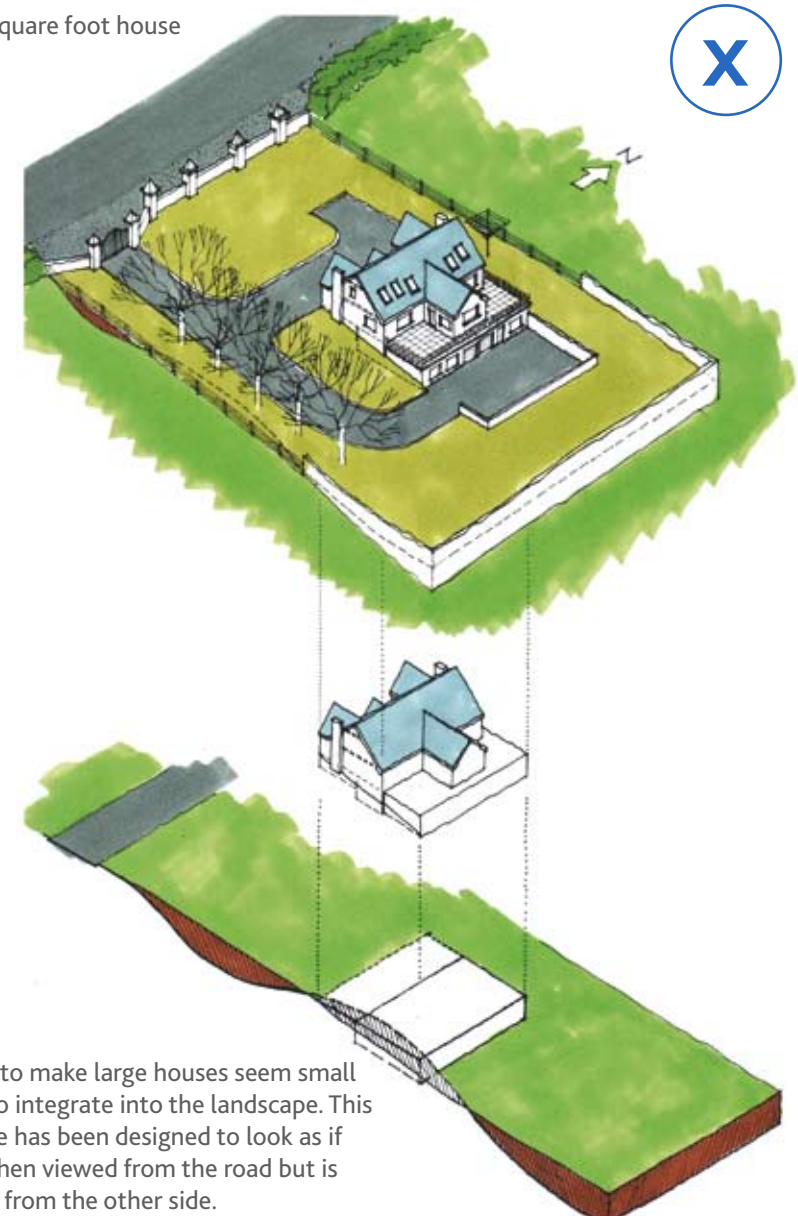
In the countryside it is often possible to see a house from a variety of vantage points and the urban notion of a house having a front and back side is often irrelevant.

Site houses in the countryside so that they blend in on all sides. This also means taking care to locate oil tanks, clothes lines, barbeques, trampolines, bins storage, car parking etc so that they do not detract from an otherwise well sited and well designed house. Consideration should be given to dropping soil vent pipes and foul waste drainage pipes internally.

The 6,000 sq. foot house illustrated on right has been sited and designed without concern for its impact from the "back". What appears to be a single storey house from the front sits on a large flat roofed base that provides almost half the floor area. The so-called "single storey" house is disconnected from the natural ground levels and the relationship between the main kitchen/living/dining rooms and the garden spaces is remote.

Outside patio areas are disconnected from gardens and lack shelter and privacy on the "front" side of the house and have a poor orientation on the "back" terrace. The overall shape and massing of the house viewed from the back is bulky.

Badly sited 6,000 square foot house



This approach tries to make large houses seem small in a way that fails to integrate into the landscape. This 6,000 sq foot house has been designed to look as if it is single storey when viewed from the road but is effectively 3 storey from the other side.



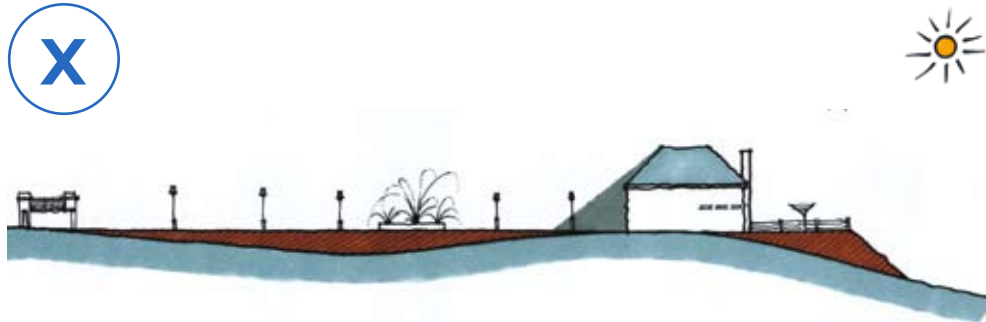
AVOID:

Locating house half way up a hillside and then relying on extensive cut and fill to form level site



AVOID:

Slicing off the top of the hill and using fill to achieve a level platform



AVOID:

Filling in hollows on the site to make it level
Siting the house on the top of a hill

Positioning houses (especially large ones) on the tops of hills is to be avoided at all costs. Remember that very large bulky houses cast deeper shadows on the surrounding garden areas making it harder to find sunny places to sit outside and also taking longer for new gardens to mature.

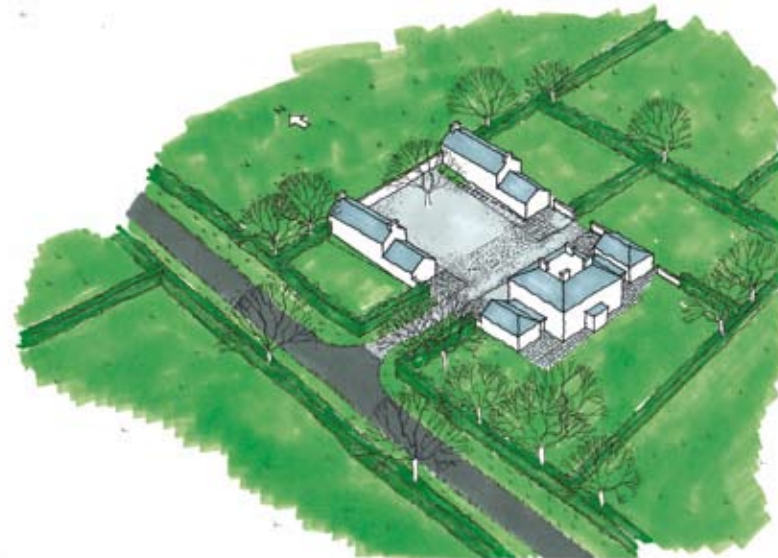
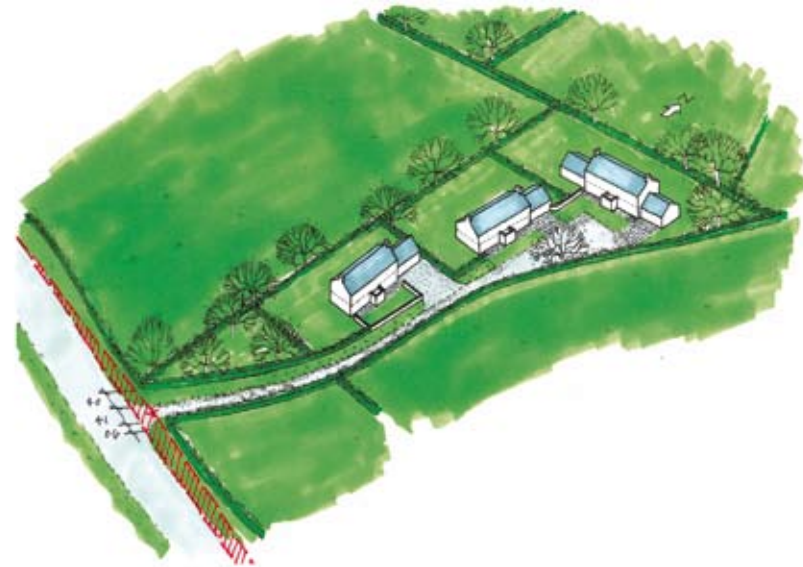
4.8 houses adjacent to other DWELLINGS

When considering how best to site an additional dwelling with other houses in the countryside there are lessons to be learnt from existing historic traditional groupings of farmhouses and other buildings. These include:

- Farm clusters with a farmhouse fronting onto a farm lane with adjacent farm outbuildings
- medium-small sized country houses with enclosing stable blocks and farm barns
- small ad hoc groupings of individual farmhouses each side of a lane rising up a drumlin
- small farmhouses along a winding farm lane.

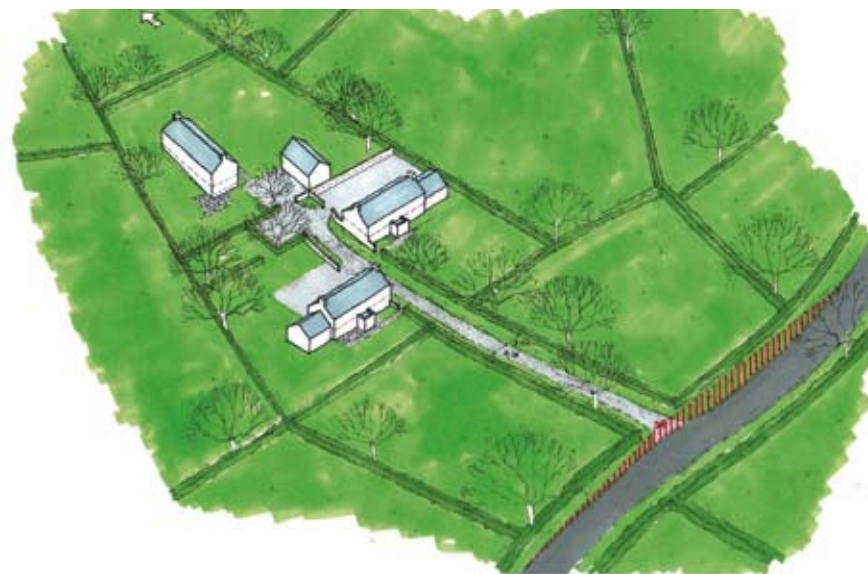
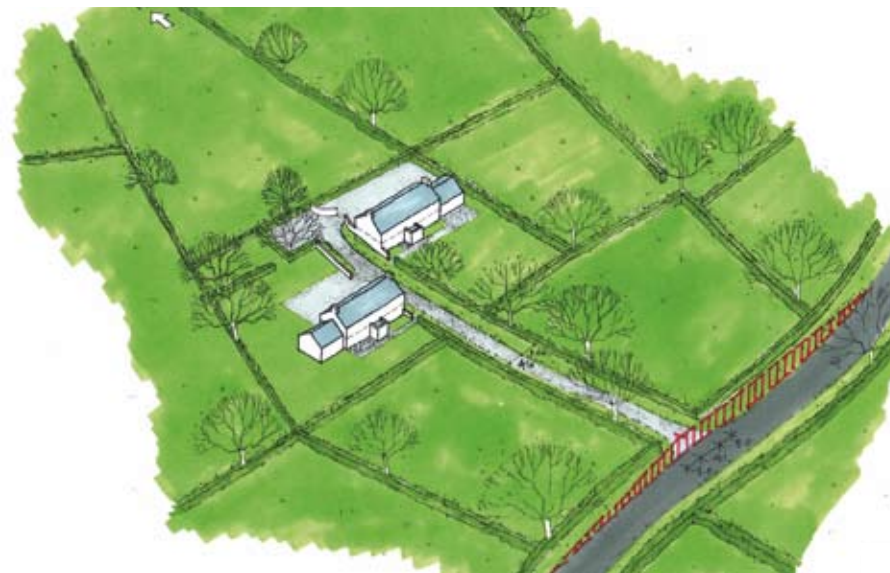
To achieve successful groupings that blend into the landscape several key factors should be present:

1. The group should have an overall visual unity
2. Houses should have relatively simple and be comprised of similar shapes
3. Houses should be small scale
4. The scale of houses should be similar relative to each other
5. Use of features typical of suburban housing (dormer windows, bay windows, porticos, pediments) should be eliminated
6. A limited range of materials and colours should be used on all houses that form part of the grouping





7. Materials should be characteristic of rural Co Monaghan
8. Create or utilise an existing country laneway as an access road (ideally this should be remote from the County Road)
9. Eliminate urban and suburban type access roads/ landscape treatments such as:
 - houses grouped around car turning circles or hammer heads
 - concrete kerbs
 - tarmac
 - blockwork walls
 - timber fences
 - pre-cast concrete fencing
 - ornate gates, fountains etc, urban lamp standards
10. Maximise rural landscape treatment such as:
 - grass verges
 - indigenous deciduous hedges – hawthorn, blackthorn etc interplanted with native deciduous trees (ash, alder, birch, beech oak etc)
 - gravelled access laneways, turning areas
 - natural local stone paving (where budgets permit)
 - car turning areas and visitor parking spaces should be tucked away and well integrated into the overall development

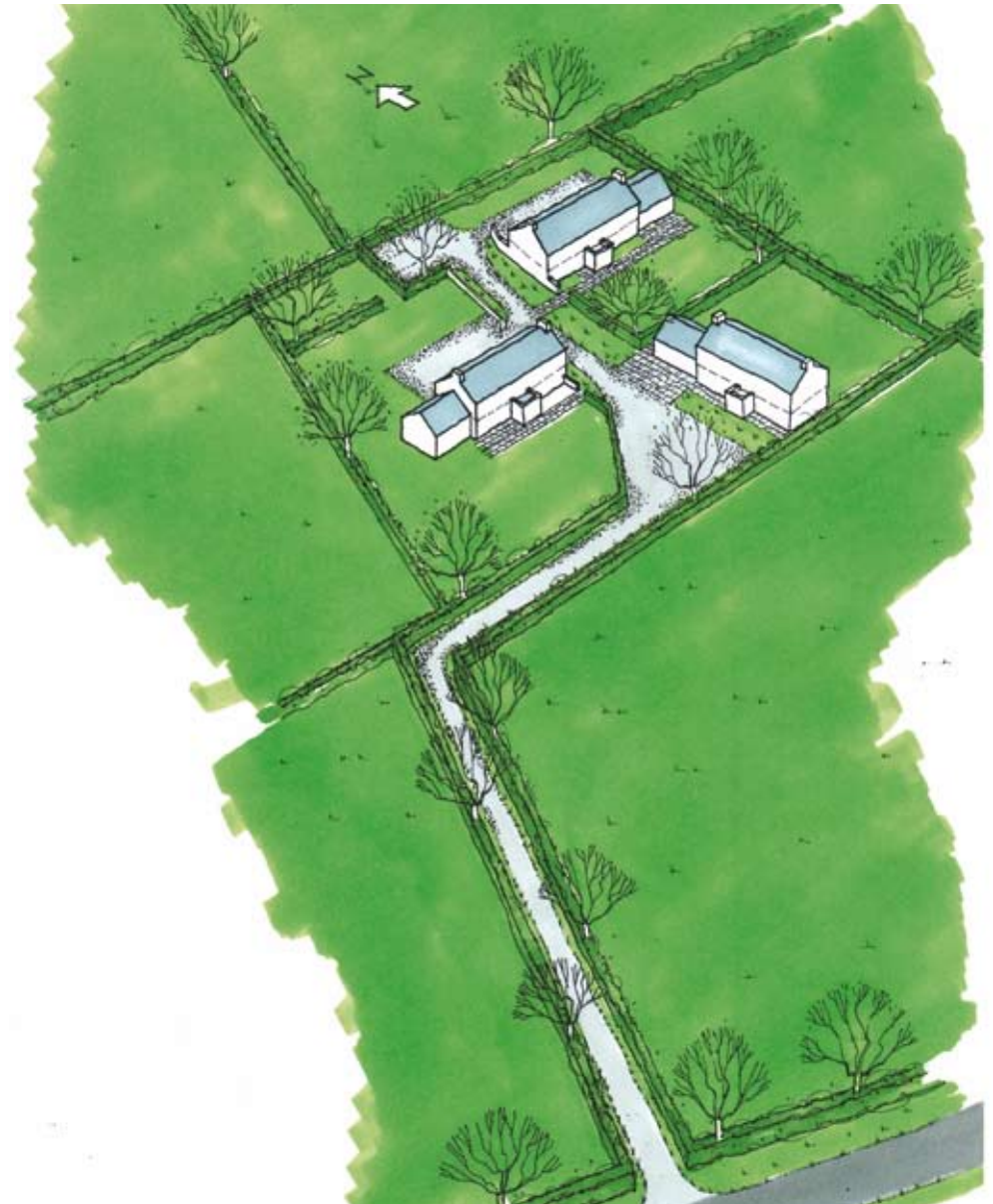
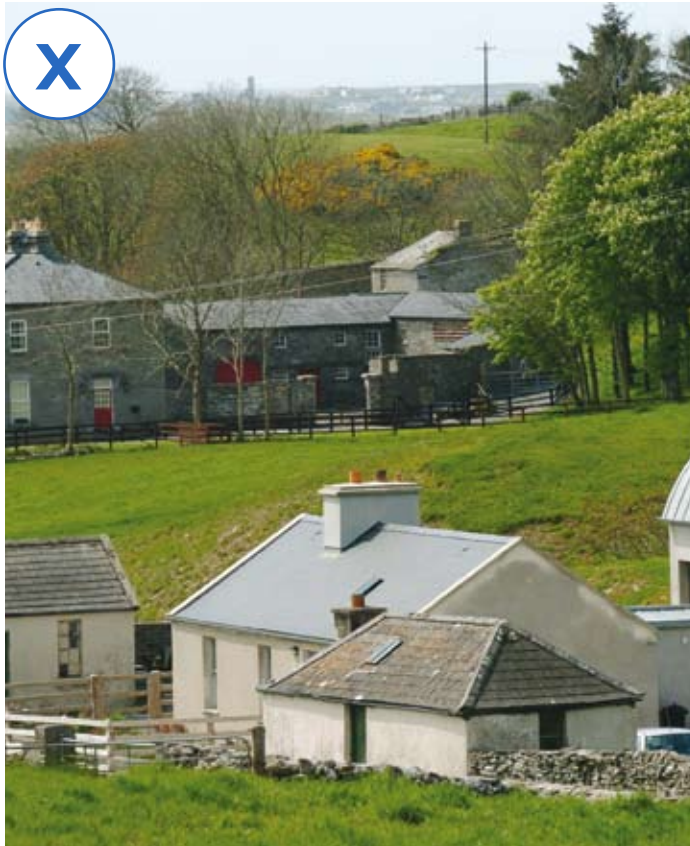




MAINTAIN ISOLATION OF GROUPINGS

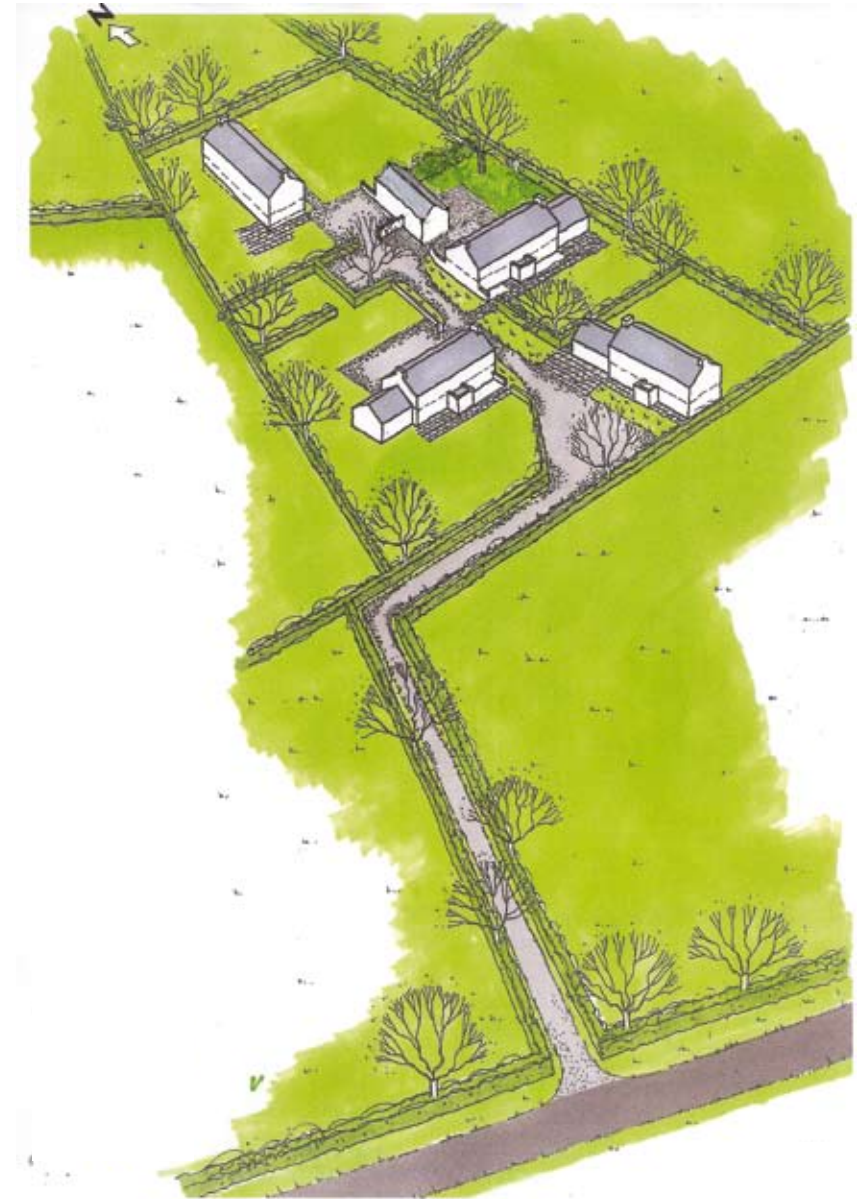
Groupings also depend for their success on being relatively isolated from any other groups of houses and one-off houses. A second or third grouping in the next field or two or three large single houses close by will significantly detract from a successful grouping.

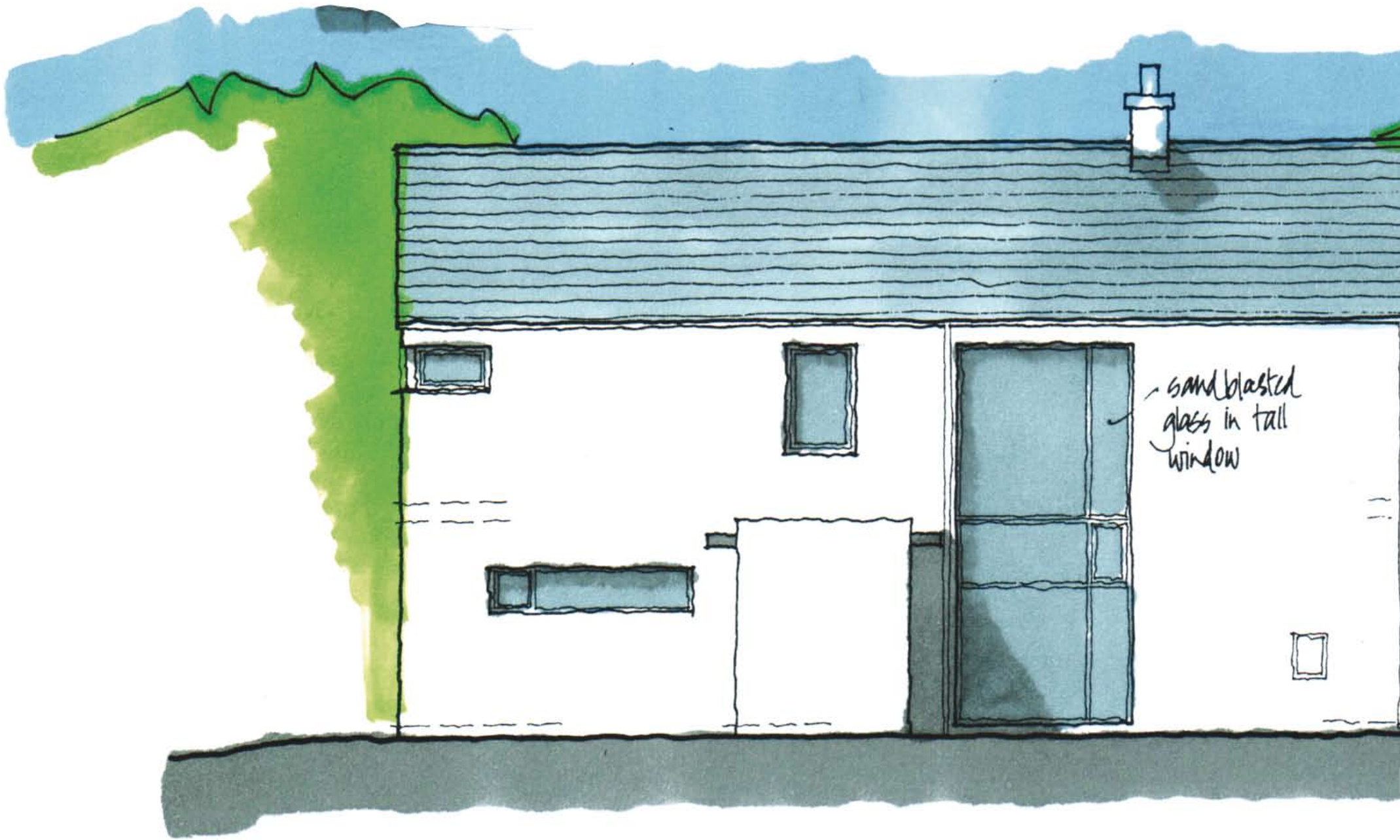
Further development in close proximity to a group of buildings may detract from the visual presence of the group.



CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES

It is possible to rework the key ingredients of traditional groupings in an innovative way to insert a new contemporary house into these groupings in a way that respects the traditional but also expresses and meets the needs of the 21st century. Such schemes will be encouraged provided they achieve a harmonious relationship with the surrounding countryside.







bringing it all together.

5. BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

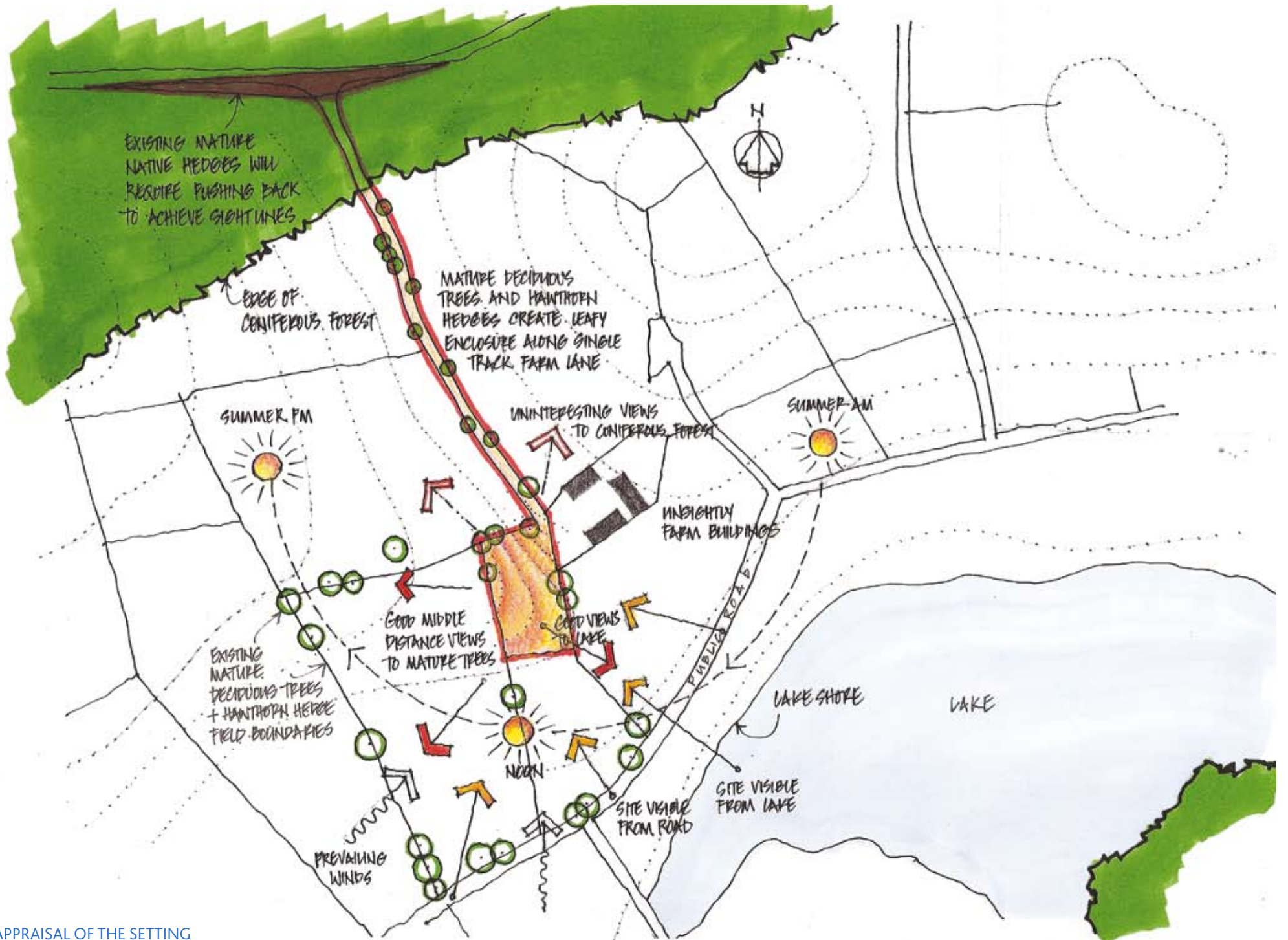
- 5.1 Worked Example
- 5.2 Making a Planning Application

5.1 worked EXAMPLE

Drawing on the advice in the previous sections of the guide this chapter illustrates how the key points already discussed can be incorporated into a new house in the Co Monaghan countryside that is contemporary in its appearance and meets the needs of a family in the 21st century but also forms part of a continuum with the past drawing on and reinforcing the identified strong signature characteristics of traditional rural houses in the county:

- Traditional roof pitch 35°
- Simple linear form e.g. no dormers or bay windows
- Two storey house fronting onto a forecourt
- L shaped grouping of house and garage
- Flat roofed porch
- Unfussy detailing
- Natural slate roof
- Self finish off white render
- Timber windows, painted
- There is generally more wall than window
- Shape and position of windows is deliberately modern
- Narrow access lane, single track
- Traditional countryside hedges interplanted with native species deciduous trees on all boundaries



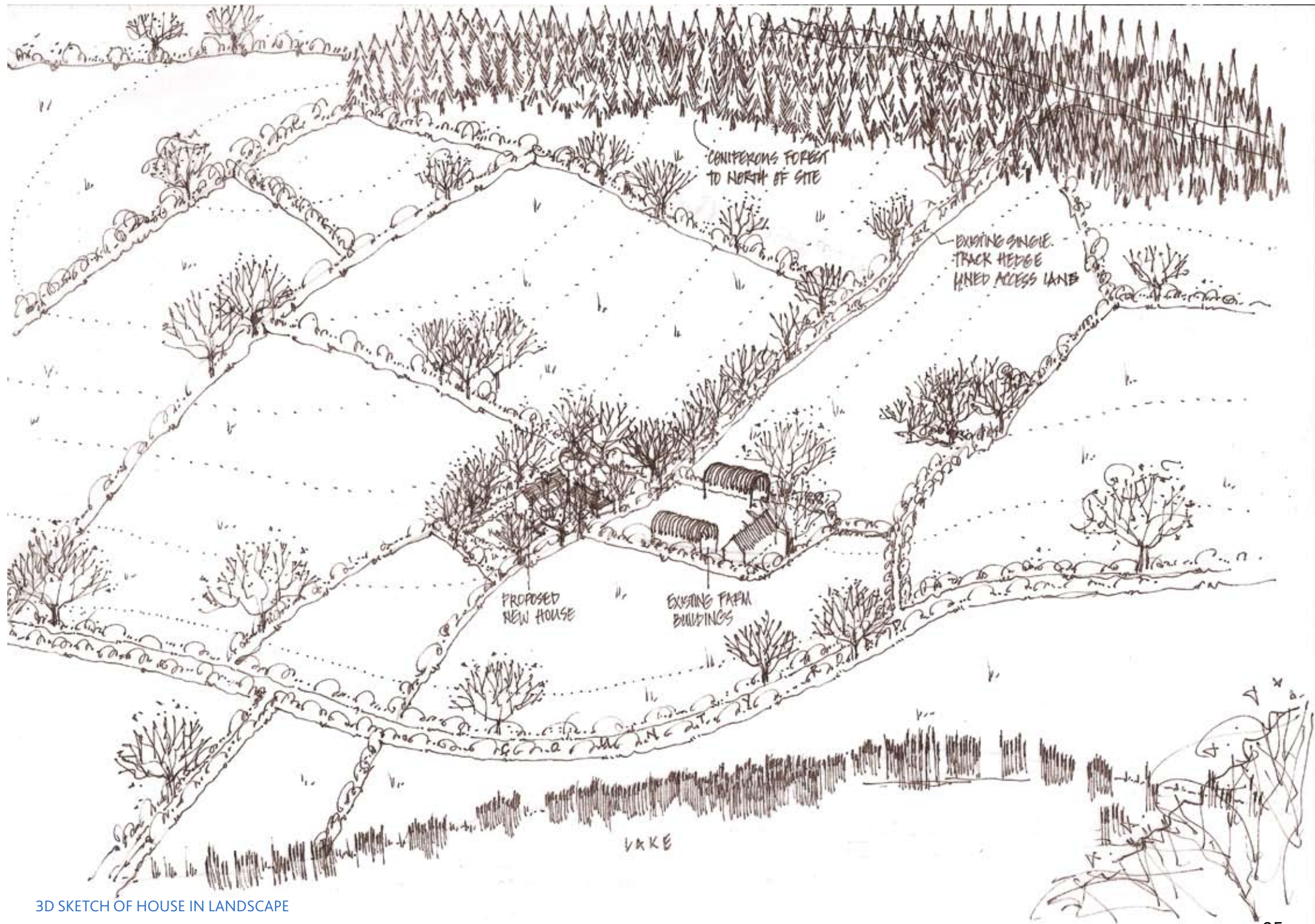


APPRAISAL OF THE SETTING

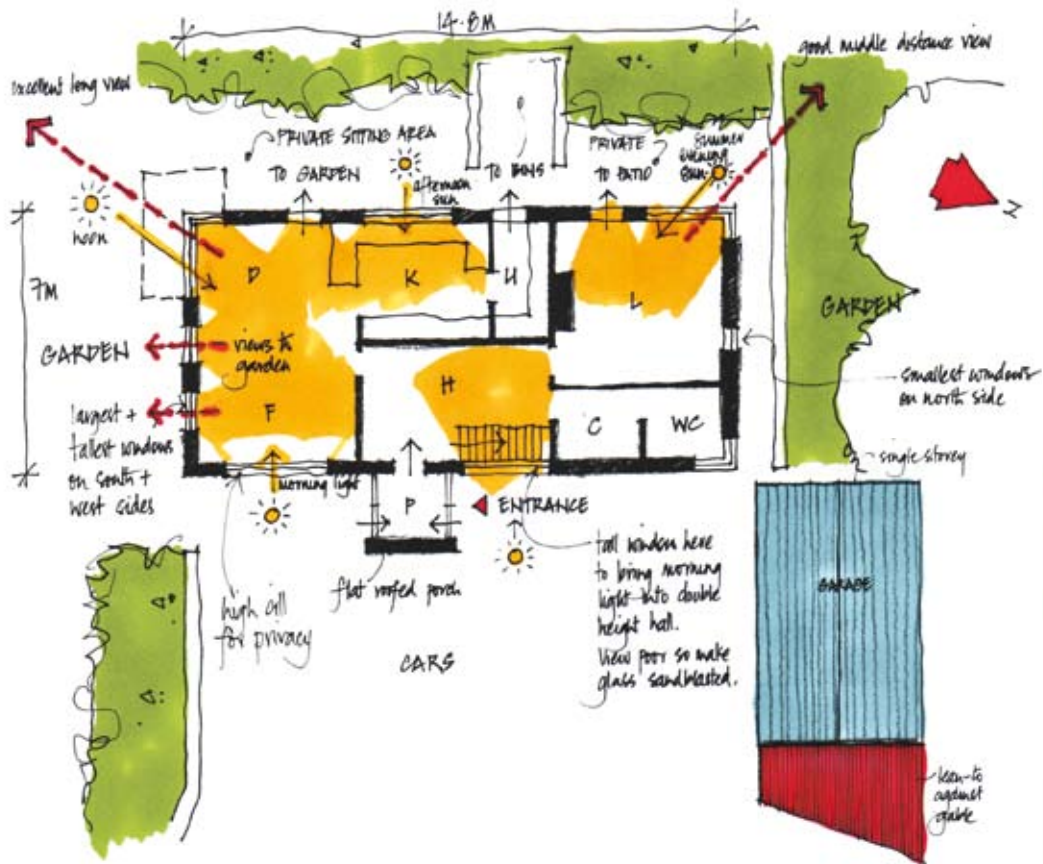


APPRAISAL OF SITE - OUTLINE PROPOSAL SITE PLAN





3D SKETCH OF HOUSE IN LANDSCAPE



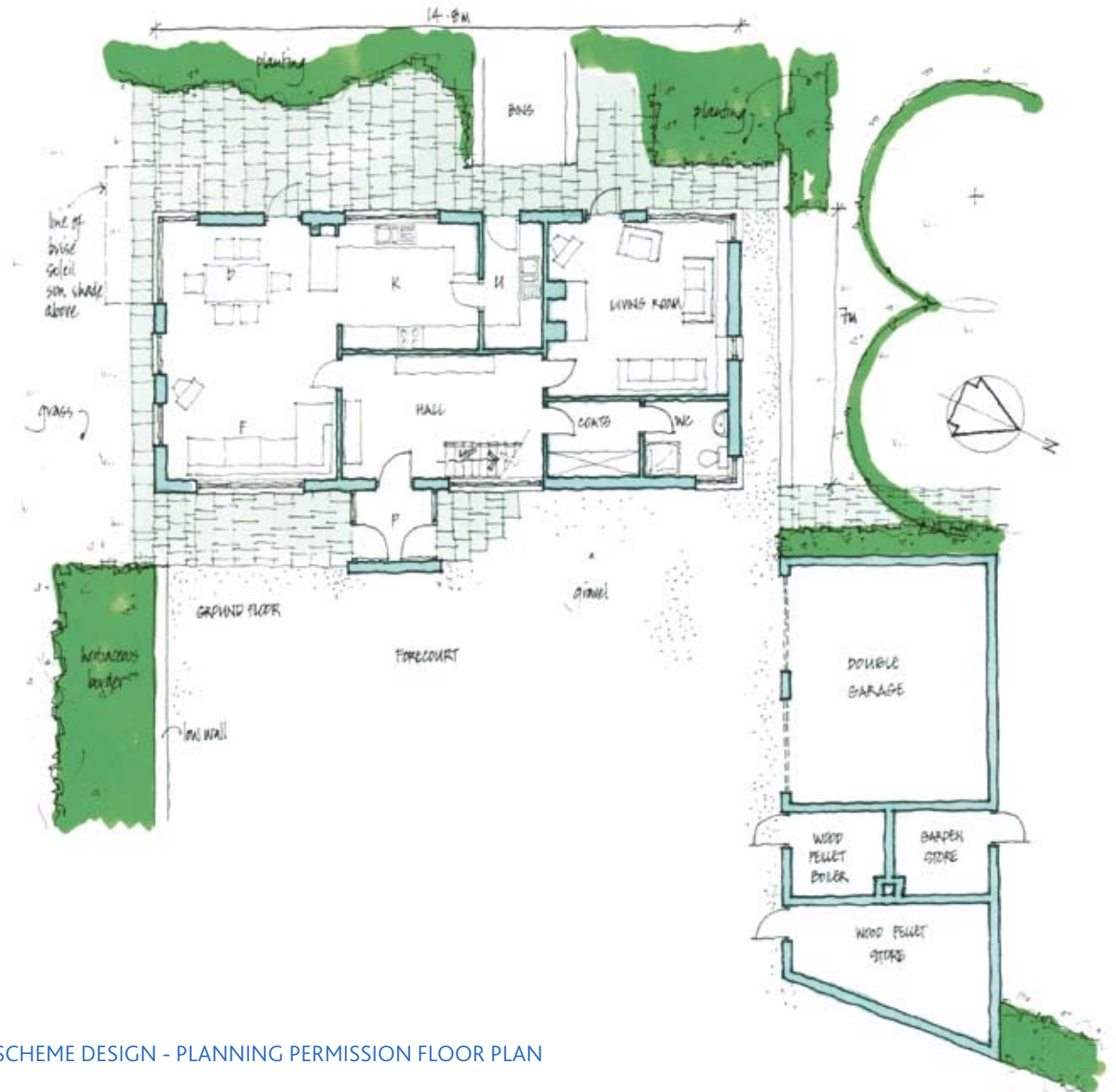
OUTLINE PROPOSAL FLOOR PLAN



OUTLINE PROPOSAL SKETCHES

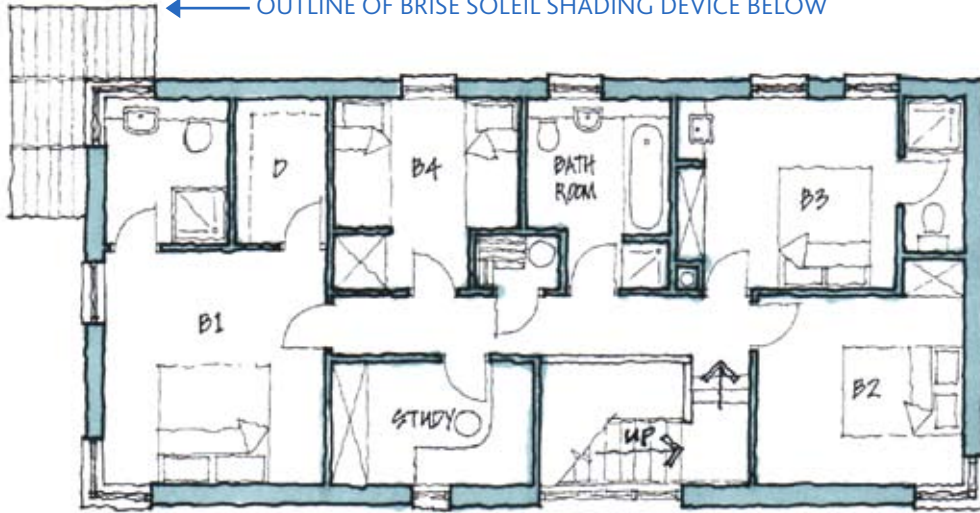
The site that has been selected is located on the east side of and on the lower slope of a typical Co Monaghan drumlin. There are good views to the south west and north west but an unfortunate grouping of unsightly farm buildings to the east mars the view in this direction. In creating this site the client purchased additional land to form a traditional access laneway from the north. There are no problems with achieving the required sight lines where this lane meets the County Road.

The length and width of the house have been kept to a minimum to allow siting of the house parallel to the contours in a way that minimises any need for extensive cut and fill and associated unsightly scarring.



SCHEME DESIGN - PLANNING PERMISSION FLOOR PLAN

← OUTLINE OF BRISE SOLEIL SHADING DEVICE BELOW



SCHEME DESIGN FLOOR PLAN - FIRST FLOOR



ELEVATION



ELEVATION



ELEVATION



SCHEME DESIGN - 3D SKETCH



5.2 making a planning APPLICATION

Once the design has been finalised a planning application must be submitted together with the appropriate fee to the planning authority for your area i.e. the County Council or Town Council- (Monaghan, Clones, Castleblayney and Carrickmacross).

Consider arranging a pre-planning meeting with the Council where you will have an opportunity to discuss your proposal and raise any concerns or queries you may have. Pre-planning discussions are an effective means of keeping all parties informed and can prove to be an extremely helpful step in the determination process. For full details of planning application procedures please contact Monaghan County Council or visit www.monaghancoco.ie.

- You must have a significant legal interest in a site to carry out the proposed development, or the written consent of the person who has that legal interest. If a prospective purchaser or tenant makes a planning application, the owner's written consent must be enclosed with the application
- Planning application forms come with explanatory notes. You should read these carefully before completing the form. The planning authority can give you advice, or you could appoint an agent (e.g. planning consultant/engineer/architect) to make the application on your behalf. Either the applicant or the agent may sign the application form. A sample form is included in this chapter.
- A fee is payable with the planning application. A flat rate fee is payable for an application to construct a new house. Details of fees can be obtained from the Department of the Environment website at <http://www.environ.ie>

In general six copies of the following documents will need to be submitted along with your planning application and the appropriate fee-

- Location Map (not less than 1:2500)
- Site or layout plan (not less than 1:500)
- Other plans and elevations (scale 1:200)
- Copies of public notices

You must give a public notice of your proposals concurrent to making an application. This must be done both:

- by a notice in a locally circulated newspaper (the planning authority will have a list of approved papers) and
- by erecting a site notice, which must be on a durable material, erected in a conspicuous position on the land or structure, so that it can be clearly visible and legible from outside.

These must identify the name of the applicant, the location of the site, the type of permission sought, and the type and extent of proposed development. It should also contain a statement that the application is available for inspection and purchase and that submissions or objections should be submitted within FIVE weeks of lodgement of a valid application. A sample notice is included in this chapter.

One copy of each notice must be provided to the authority along with your application. For the newspaper notice you must give the planning authority the full page showing the date of publication. The date of erection of the site notice must also be given and it must be in position, in a legible and visible condition, on the site for at least FIVE weeks. It is very important to note that the application will be declared invalid if the notice is not on site when it is inspected by the planning officers.

- Applications must be received within 2 weeks of publication of a newspaper and the erection of a site notice



MONAGHAN COUNTY COUNCIL
Monaghan County Council,
Planning Section,
County Offices, The Glen, Monaghan
Tel: (047) 305000 Fax: (047) 82739
Email: planning@monaghancoco.ie

Office Use:
Application Type.....
Register Ref.....
Amount Rec.....
Receipt No.....
Date.....
O.S.I. Map Ref.....

BEFORE COMPLETING THIS FORM PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING

STANDARD PLANNING APPLICATION AND ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION

Failure to complete this form or attach the necessary documentation, or the submission of incorrect information or omission of required information will lead to the invalidation of your application. Therefore please ensure that each section of this application form is fully completed and signed, entering n/a (not applicable) where appropriate, and that all necessary documentation is attached to your application form.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

It should be noted that each planning authority has its own development plan, which sets out local development policies and objectives for its own area. The authority may, therefore, need supplementary information (i.e. other than that required on this form) in order to determine whether the application conforms with the development plan and may request this on a supplementary application form.

Failure to supply the supplementary information will not invalidate your planning application but may delay the decision-making process or lead to a refusal of permission. Therefore applicants should contact the relevant planning authority to determine what local policies and objectives would apply to the development proposed and whether additional information is required.

DATA PROTECTION

The planning process is an open and public one. In that context, all planning applications and accompanying documentation, with the exception of certain contact details, are made available for public inspection/purchase and may be made available on the planning authority's website where this is their policy. Planning authorities also publish weekly lists of planning applications received as well as weekly lists of planning decisions in hard copy and, where this is their policy, on their websites.

It has come to our attention that the publication of planning applications by planning authorities can lead to applicants being targeted by persons in the business sector engaged in direct marketing. In response to a request from the Data Protection Commissioner, you are hereby given an opportunity to indicate a preference with regard to the receipt of direct marketing arising from the lodging of a planning application.

If you are satisfied to receive direct marketing please tick this box

Direct marketing may be by post, by telephone, by hand or by electronic mail such as email or text message where such details are supplied.

It is the responsibility of those entities wishing to use the personal data on planning applications and decision lists for direct marketing purposes to be satisfied that they may do so legitimately under the requirements of the Data Protection Acts 1988 & 2003 taking account of the preference outlined above.

PLANNING APPLICATION FORM

1. Application for:

Permission *Outline Permission
*Permission consequent Permission for
on the grant of Retention
Outline Permission

Place an **x** in the appropriate box

Where planning permission is **consequent on grant of Outline Permission**, please quote the outline permission ref. no.

Date of grant of Outline Permission: _____

***NOTE: Permission consequent on the grant of Outline Permission** should be sought only where Outline Permission was previously granted. Under S.36 3(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 Outline Permission lasts for 3 years.

Outline Permission may not be sought for:

- the retention of structures or continuance of uses, or
- developments requiring the submission of an Environmental Impact Statement (EPPC/Waste Licence or works to Protected Structures or proposed Protected Structures.
-

Date Received:

Register Reference:

2. Location for proposed development:

(a) Postal Address or Townland or Location (as may best identify the land and/or structure in question).

(b) Ordnance Survey Map Reference Number and the grid reference where available. (Grid reference in terms of the Irish transverse mercator).

3. (a) **Name of applicant** (person/entity seeking planning permission, **not** an agent acting on his/her behalf)

(b) Address must be supplied at end of this form (question 23)

14. Social and Affordable Housing

Please tick appropriate box

Is the application an application for permission for development to which Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended applies? Yes No

If the answer to the above question is **yes** and the development is not exempt (see below), you must specify, as part of your application, the manner in which you propose to comply with Section 96 of Part V of the Act. **Please submit proposals on separate sheet.**

If the answer to the above question is **yes**, but you consider the development to be exempt by virtue of Section 97 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, a copy of the Certificate of Exemption under Section 97 must be submitted (or, where an application for a Certificate of Exemption has been made, but has not yet been decided, a copy of the application should be submitted).

If the answer to the above question is **no** by virtue of Section 96(13) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, details indicating the basis on which Section 96(13) is considered to apply to the development should be submitted.

N.B. This section must be completed for all proposals for the provision of one or more new dwelling units on residentially zoned lands.

15. Development Details

Please tick appropriate box.

- (1) Does the proposed development consist of work to a **protected structure** and/or its curtilage or **proposed protected structure** and/or its curtilage? Yes No
Note: If **Yes** Newspaper advertisement and site notice must indicate this fact.
- (2) Does the proposed development consist of work to the exterior of a structure which is located within an **architectural conservation area (ACA)**? Yes No

Note: If the answer is YES to either 15(1) or 15(2) TEN sets of drawings/plans/photographs must be submitted with the Planning Application.

- (3) Does the application relate to development which affects or is close to a **monument or place recorded under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994**? Yes No
- (4) Does the application relate to work within or close to a **European Site** (under S.I. No. 94 of 1997) or a **Natural Heritage Area**? Yes No
- (5) Does the proposed development require the preparation of an **Environmental Impact Statement**? Yes No
- (6) Does the application relate to a development which comprises or is for the purposes of an activity requiring an **integrated pollution prevention and control licence**? Yes No
- (7) Does the application relate to a development which comprises or is for the purposes of an activity requiring a **waste licence**? Yes No

(8) Do the **Major Accident Regulations** apply to the proposed development? Yes No

(9) Does the application relate to a development in a **Strategic Development Zone**? Yes No

(10) Does the proposed development involve the **demolition of any habitable house**? Yes No

Note: Demolition of a Habitable House requires Planning Permission.

16. Site History

(1) **Details regarding site history** (if known)

Has the site in question ever, to your knowledge, been flooded?

Yes No

If yes, please give details e.g. year, extent

Are you aware of **previous uses of the site** e.g. dumping or quarrying?

Yes No

If yes, please give details.

(2) Are you aware of any **valid planning applications previously made** in respect of this land/structure?

Yes No

If yes, please state planning reference number(s) and the date(s) of receipt of the planning application(s) by the planning authority if known.

Reference No: _____ Date: _____

Note: If a valid planning application has been made in respect of this land or structure in the six months prior to the submission of this application, then the site notice must be on a yellow background in accordance with Article 19(4) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2006. A valid application includes an application subsequently withdrawn.

(3) Is the site of the proposal **subject to a current appeal** to An Bord Pleanála in respect of a similar development.
(Note: the Appeal must be determined or withdrawn before another similar application can be made).

Yes No

An Bord Pleanála Reference Number: _____

17. Do any **Statutory Notices** apply to the site/building at present? (e.g. Enforcement, Dangerous Buildings, Derelict Sites, Building Control, Fire Safety etc.)

Yes No

Place an X in the appropriate box.

If yes, please give details

<p>18. Pre-application Consultation Has a pre-application consultation taken place in relation to the proposed development? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please give details: _____ Reference No. (if any): _____ Date(s) of consultation ____/____/____ Persons involved: _____</p> <p>19. Services. (1) Proposed Source of Water Supply Existing Connection <input type="checkbox"/> New connection <input type="checkbox"/> Public Mains <input type="checkbox"/> Group Water Scheme <input type="checkbox"/> Private Well <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ _____ Name of Group Water Scheme (where applicable) _____</p> <p>(2) Proposed Wastewater Management/Treatment Existing <input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Public Sewer <input type="checkbox"/> Conventional septic tank system <input type="checkbox"/> Other on-site treatment system <input type="checkbox"/> Please specify: _____ _____ (3) Proposed Surface Water Disposal Public Sewer/Drain <input type="checkbox"/> Soakpit <input type="checkbox"/> Watercourse <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Please specify _____ _____</p>	<p>20. Details of Public Notice *Approved newspaper in which notice was published. Name of Newspaper _____ Date of publication: _____ * Note: The list of approved newspapers for the purpose of giving intention to make a planning application, is available from the Council. Please also refer to directions for completion of Site Notice. Date on which site notice was Erected: _____ White <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>21. Application Fee Fee Payable _____ Basis of Calculation _____</p> <p>22. I hereby declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the information given in this form is correct and accurate and fully compliant with the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended, and the Regulations made thereunder:- Signed _____ (Applicant or Agent as appropriate) Date _____ An applicant will not be entitled solely by reason of a planning permission to carry out the development. The applicant may need other consents, depending on the type of development. For example, all new buildings, extensions and alterations to, and certain changes of use of existing buildings must comply with building regulations, which set out basic design and construction requirements.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (Sections 27, 28)</p> <p>27. All applications for Agricultural Developments must complete The Agricultural Form (AG 1 Form). 28. All applications for dwellings in Rural Areas under Strong Urban Influence must be accompanied by a completed Rural Housing Application Form (RHI Form).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Notes to Applicant</p> <p>Sections 1 to 22 of this form MUST be completed insofar as they relate to your particular proposal. Failure to do so will render your application invalid.</p> <p>The additional contact information at Sections 23 to 26 will not be made available with the planning application.</p> <p>Section 27 seeks additional information which will be needed by this Planning Authority to assess the application.</p> <p>Section 28 seeks additional information which may be needed by this Planning Authority to assess the application having regard to its development plan which sets out local development policies and objectives for its own area.</p> <p>Failure to submit this additional information, where relevant (Section 28), will NOT invalidate your application. However, the Planning Authority may not be able to reach a decision on whether or not to grant permission on the basis of the information available to it.</p> <p>Therefore, failure to supply any relevant supplementary information could delay the application or lead to a refusal of permission.</p> <p>You are advised to contact this office to determine what local policies and objectives would apply to your proposal and whether supplementary information is required.</p> <p>Please note the provisions of Section 34(13) of the Planning and Development Act 2000. "A person shall not be entitled solely by reason of a permission under this section to carry out any development".</p> <p>The applicant may need other consents, depending on the type of development. For example, all new buildings, extensions and alterations to, and certain changes of use of existing buildings must comply with building regulations, which set out basic design and construction requirements.</p> <p>Please note that in accordance with Section 251 of the Planning and Development Act 2000:- "Where calculating any appropriate period or other time limit referred to in this Act or in any other regulations made under this Act, the Period between the 24th day of December and the 1st day of January, both days inclusive, shall be disregarded." (Not applicable to Development Plan matters)</p>	
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It is imperative that this information is submitted with the planning application form.

**ADDITIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION
NOT TO BE MADE AVAILABLE WITH APPLICATION**

Please note:

- The applicant’s address **must** be submitted on this page.
- If the applicant/agent wishes to submit additional contact information, this may be included here.
- This page will not be published as part of the planning file.

23. Applicant²:

<i>Address (Required)</i>	
<i>Telephone No.</i>	
<i>Email Address</i>	
<i>Fax No.</i>	

24. Person/Agent acting on behalf of the Applicant (if any):

<i>Address</i>	
<i>Telephone No.</i>	
<i>Email Address (if any)</i>	
<i>Fax No. (if any)</i>	

Should all correspondence be sent to the above address? (please tick appropriate box)
 (Please note that if the answer is ‘No’, all correspondence will be sent to the Applicant’s address)

Yes [] No []

25. Person responsible for preparation of Drawings and Plans:

<i>Address</i>	
<i>Telephone No.</i>	
<i>Email Address (if any)</i>	
<i>Fax No. (if any)</i>	

26. Owner (required where applicant is not the owner):

<i>Address (required)</i>	
<i>Telephone No.</i>	
<i>Email Address (if any)</i>	
<i>Fax No. (if any)</i>	