



the signature of MONAGHAN

2. The Signature of Monaghan...

- 2.1 Character & Context
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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

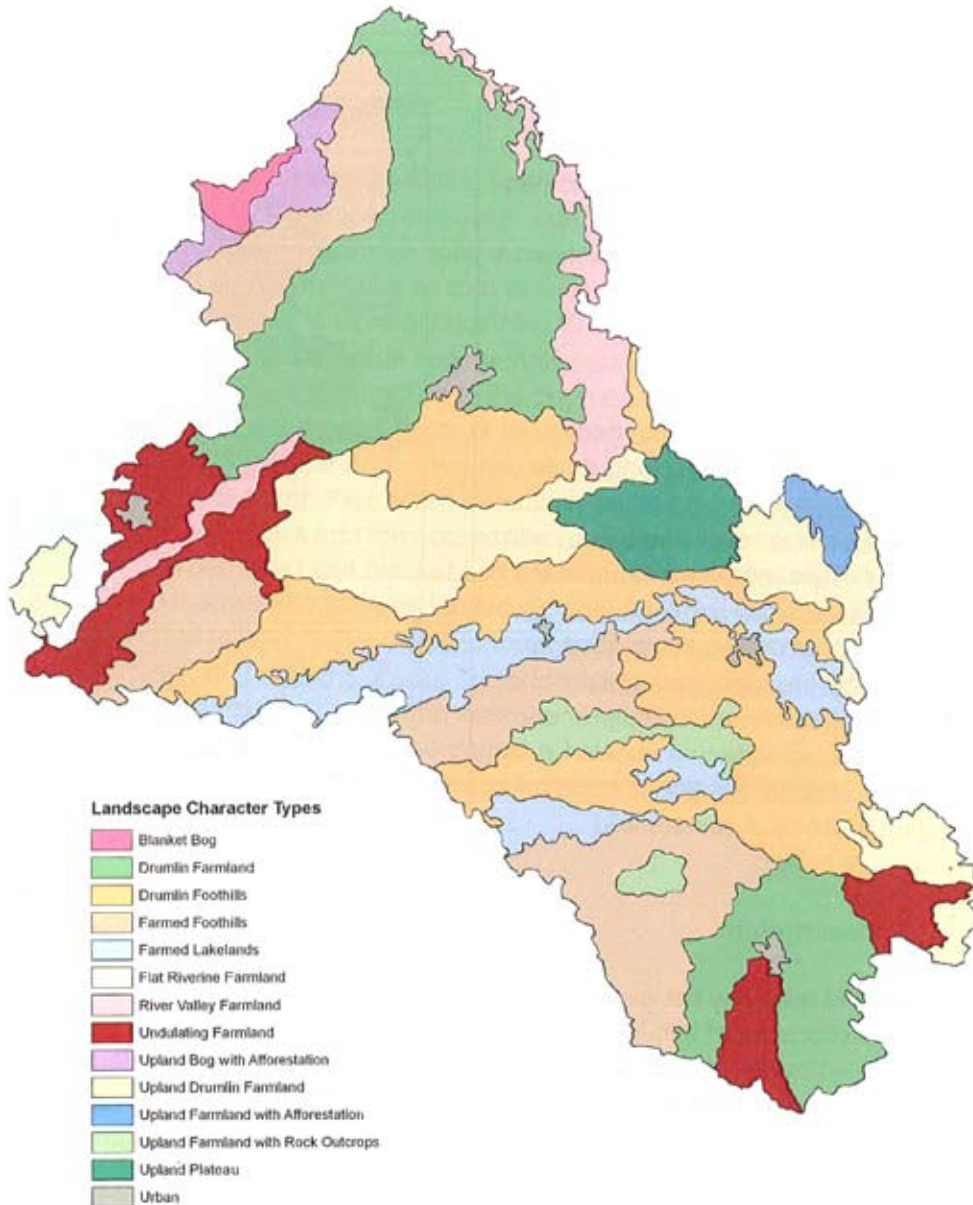
THE MONAGHAN LANDSCAPE

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.

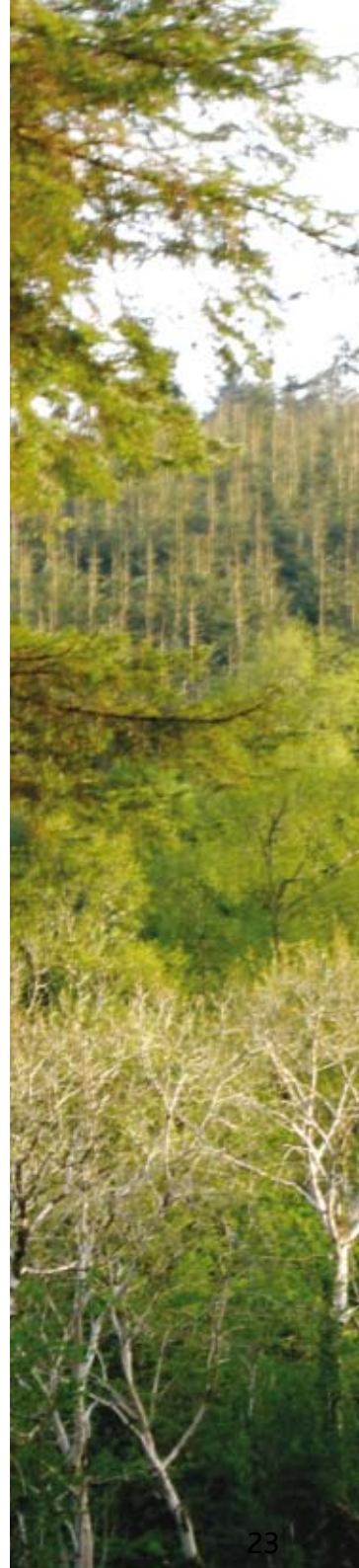
■ UPLAND DRUMLIN FARMLAND

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

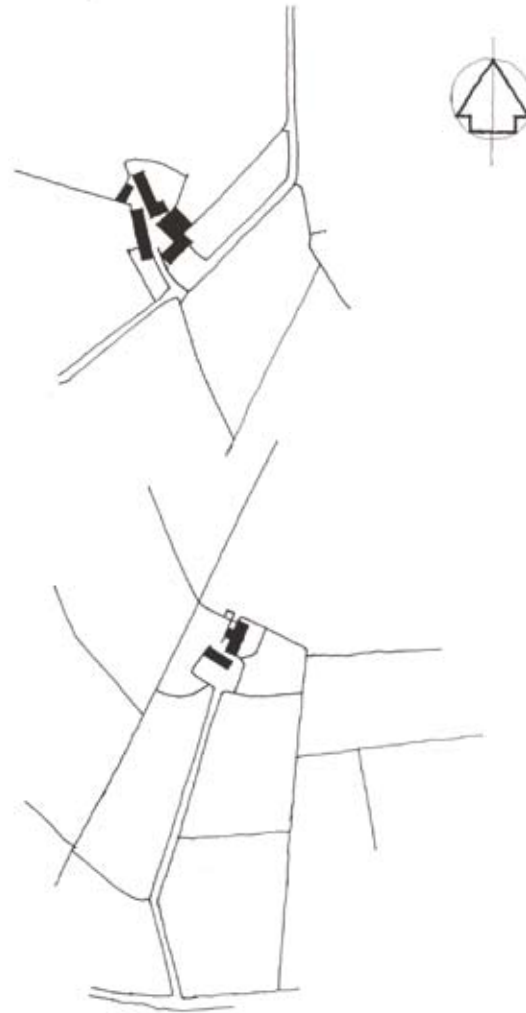
SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

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.



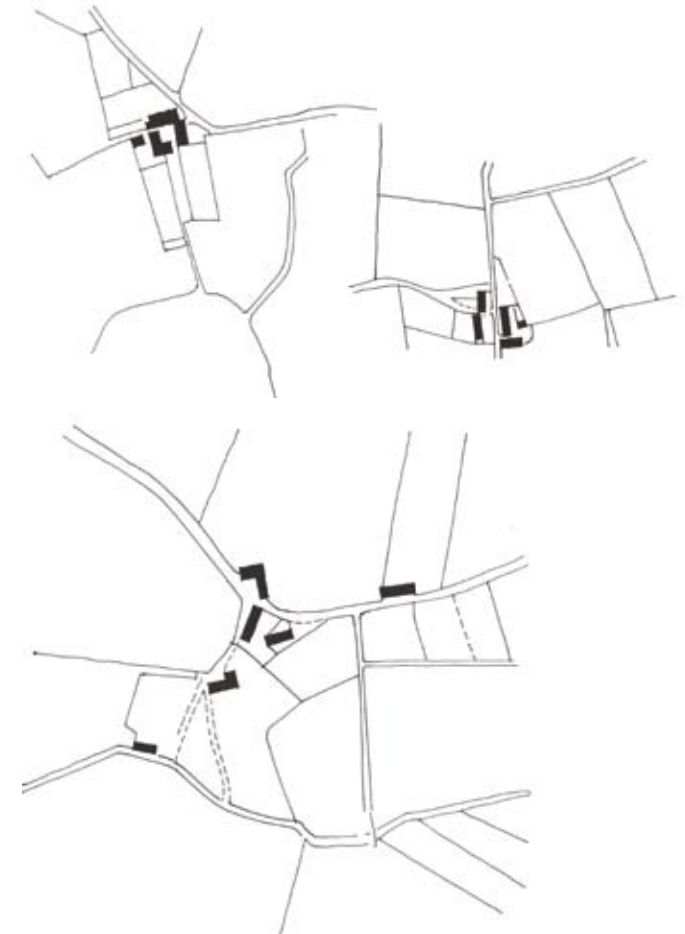
FARM HOUSE AND OUTBUILDINGS CLUSTER ON LANEWAY

- 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



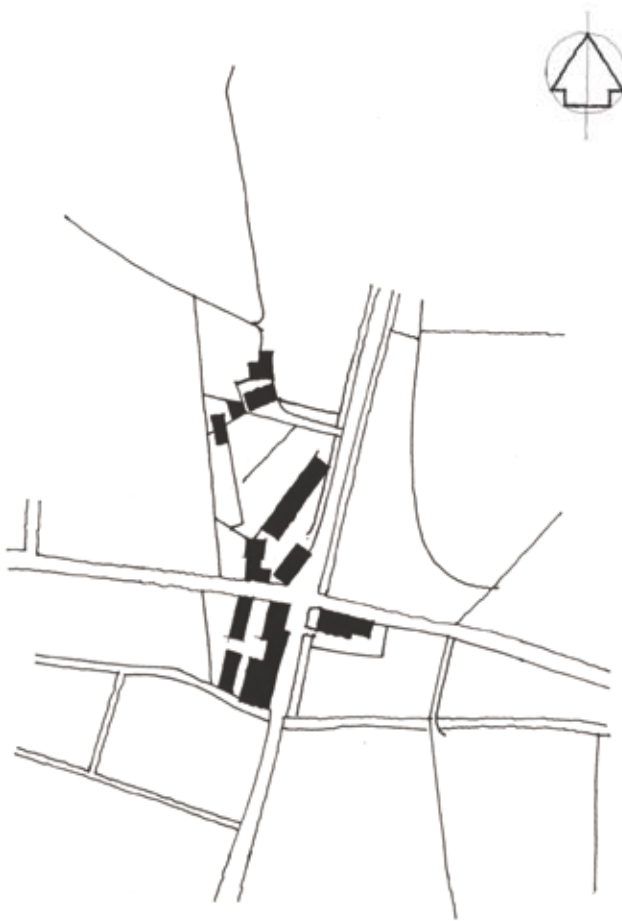
FARM HOUSE AND OUTBUILDINGS CLUSTER FRONTING COUNTY ROAD

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.



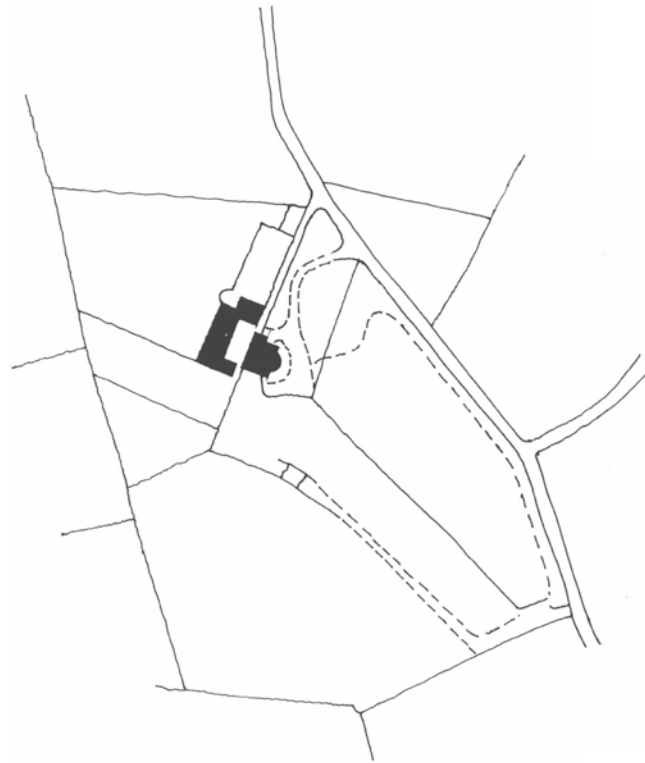
CROSSROADS

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.

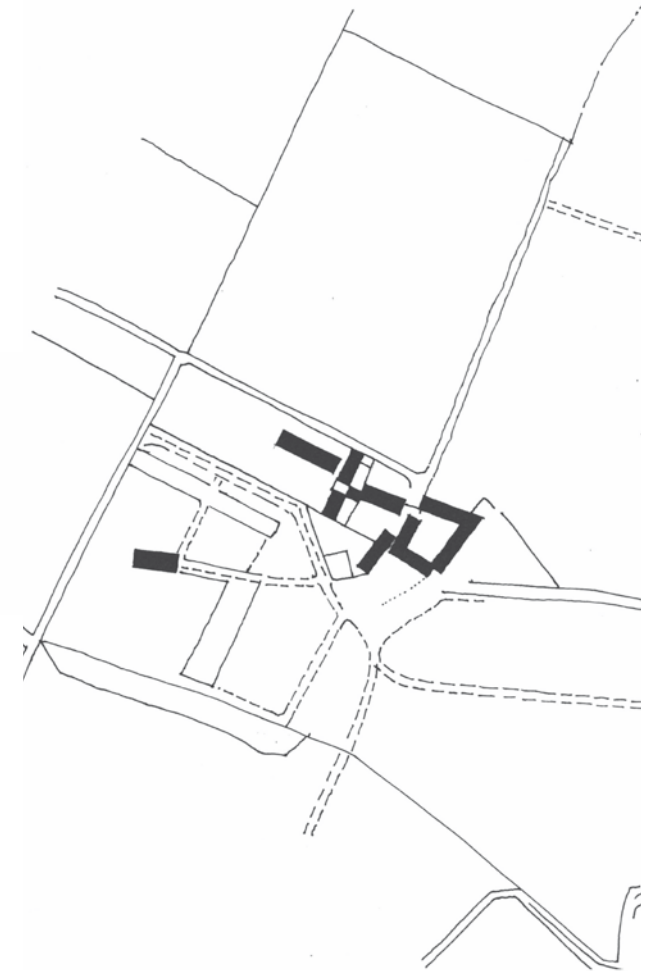


SMALL COUNTRY HOUSE

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



