

SG

SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE



the **moray** council

HOUSING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE



MORAY LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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1 Introduction

Moray's countryside is a unique and finite resource. The Moray landscape greatly contributes to the 'quality of life' enjoyed by residents and to the economy where it plays a central role in sustaining the continuing growth of the tourism industry.

The natural beauty and heritage of local dwellings built by past generations and the way they relate to the landscape are a vital component of the attractiveness of the Moray countryside. Careful forethought or 'planning' of new housing in the countryside needs to take place prior to these buildings, of some permanence, being erected so as not to detrimentally impact on Moray's most valuable resource.

This Supplementary Guidance (SG), Housing in the Countryside, provides advice on policies H6 (Reuse & Replacement of Existing Buildings in the Countryside) and H7 (New Housing in the Open Countryside) of the Moray Local Development Plan 2015 (MLDP 2015). The main objectives of the document are:

- To provide advice on the interpretation of key aspects of policy H6 and H7, to provide a consistent approach to decision-making;
- To guide new development to the most appropriate locations, where it does not have an adverse impact on the landscape;
- To ensure new development reflects traditional patterns of development in the locality;
- To promote high quality new development in the countryside that respects the local character and rural heritage;
- To encourage new development that is energy efficient, both in location and construction; and,
- To reflect policy guidance from the Scottish Government which encourages the Planning System to promote good design, encourage energy efficiency and integrate new rural development into the landscape.

2 Background

(i) National Planning Context



Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) recognises that the rural landscape of Scotland is changing. Traditional ways of living where houses were built to accommodate the requirements of farming, forestry, estate management and distilling will remain but they need to function alongside new ones to sustain the vitality of rural communities. Planning has a central role to play in guiding development, that is appropriate in scale and kind, to the most suitable locations to ensure the character and quality of the countryside is not eroded.

A Scottish Government policy statement, sets out the expectations on the planning system to create places with high standards of design in both urban and rural areas. Planning Advice Note 72 (PAN72), Housing in the Countryside, reinforces these expectations specifically in relation to the design and siting of new houses in the countryside whereby good quality rural housing respects the Scottish landscape and building traditions.

(ii) Local Planning Context

Moray is fortunate to have a countryside of rich quality and diversity. Its value is in its open, uncluttered spaces, the simple enjoyment of landscape and scenery, and the wide range of recreational opportunities this environment offers. This value is also an important economic asset, where it attracts business investment into Moray, and plays a central role in sustaining the continuing growth of the tourism industry. The siting, location and design of new development in the countryside is therefore of utmost importance to ensure this value is not gradually eroded. The cumulative impact of successive mistakes, which can be more obvious than in a town or village given the openness of the landscape and generally higher visibility, will be detrimental to Moray's sustainable growth, in terms of business and tourism potential and 'quality of life' for residents.



The development strategy for Moray, as set out in the Proposed Moray Local Development Plan, substantiates that most new rural housing should take place within rural communities to support their role as social focal points as well as the community facilities and employment they may provide to the surrounding countryside. Although the development strategy allows for some new housing in the countryside on well-located sites that have minimal environmental impact, this should not be the primary means for the provision of rural housing, as this method of delivery does not comply with the principles of sustainable development.

The MLDP 2015 sets out two primary policies to accommodate housing in the countryside; Policy H6 (Re-use and Replacement of Existing Buildings in the Countryside) and Policy H7 (New Housing in the Open Countryside). These policies will be applied in conjunction with other policies that may be applicable, such as IMP1 (Developer Requirements) and any other material considerations the development management case officer may consider relevant to determine whether planning consent will be issued. Material considerations will include other relevant Council documents such as 'Transportation Requirements for Small Developments in Rural Parts of Moray'. Each proposal will be assessed on its own merits. To prevent mistakes of the past being repeated, undesirable precedents of poor located, sited and designed development will not be accepted as a relevant material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Developer Obligations

Proposals will have to comply with policy IMP3 (Developer Obligations) of the LDP. Where the development has a measurable adverse or negative impact on existing infrastructure, community facilities or amenity, an appropriate contribution will be sought. Further advice can be viewed in the Council's SG, Developer Obligations.



3 POLICY H6: Reuse & Replacement of Existing Buildings in the Countryside

Proposals for the replacement or re-use of existing buildings in the countryside and any accompanying new build will primarily be managed through policy H6. The following sub-sections provide guidance on the interpretation of key phrases contained within the policy.

Reuse & Rehabilitation

The reuse or rehabilitation of existing buildings will usually take the form of renovation or conversion. Renovation is the extension or modernisation of existing houses. Conversion is the adaption of non-domestic buildings for residential use.

Substantially intact buildings are equivalent to level 4 in diagram 1. These should be sensitively renovated or converted to ensure the retention of local vernacular buildings that assist in maintaining the rural character and appearance of the Moray countryside. Their complete replacement with a new dwelling(s) will only be supported if sufficient evidence (on structural condition and financial viability) can be submitted to the authority's satisfaction that conversion or renovation cannot be pursued.

Structures that are built for countryside uses are situated and constructed for functional purposes (e.g. stone byres). As a result, they may be poorly integrated within the landscape. This may be exacerbated when the building(s) is converted into a dwelling(s). Proposals to convert rural buildings must take account of their integration within the landscape through landform and planting. Where this is inadequate the proposal must be accompanied by a plan showing 25% of the site to be planted with native species trees, at least 1.5 metres in height. This will help integrate the dwelling(s) into its surrounding environment.

The number of new build that accompany a renovation or conversion development must not dominate the overall development or have a suburban layout.

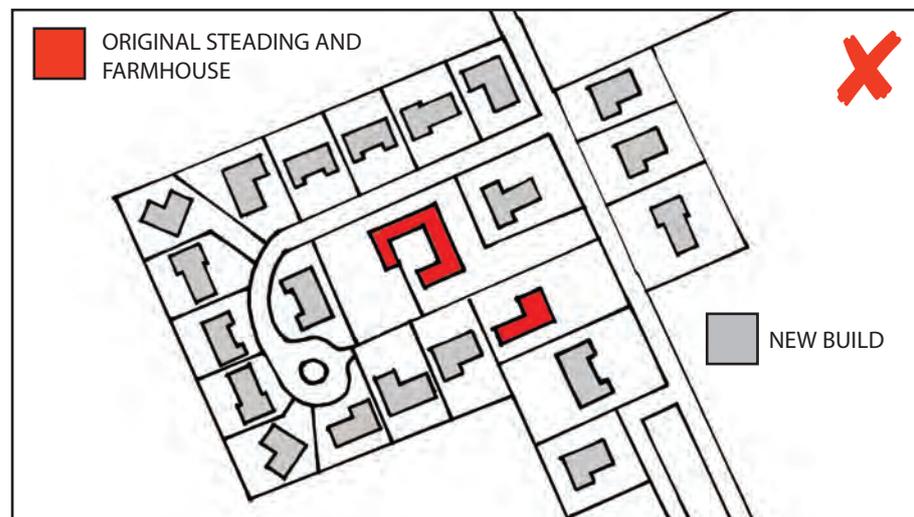
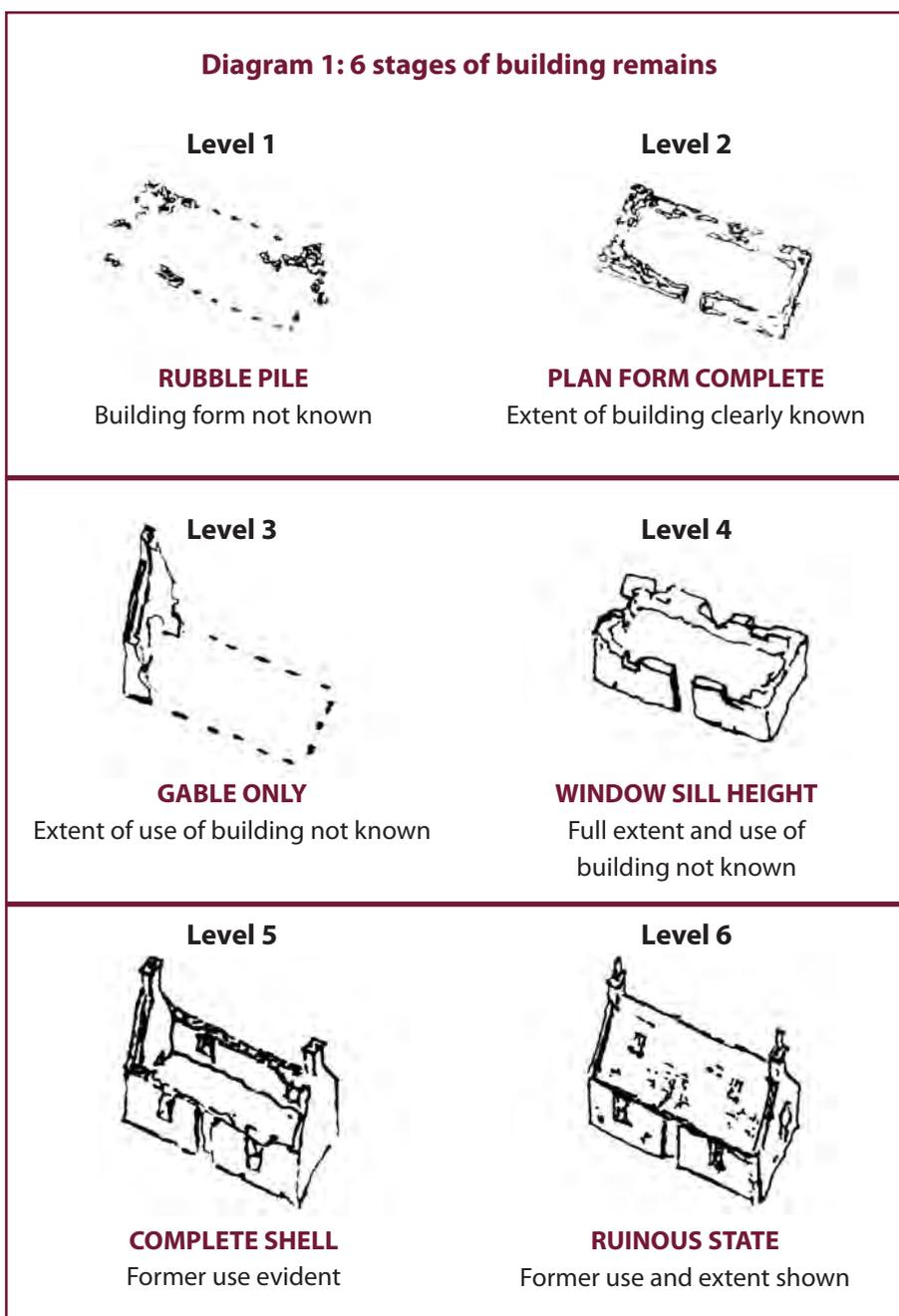
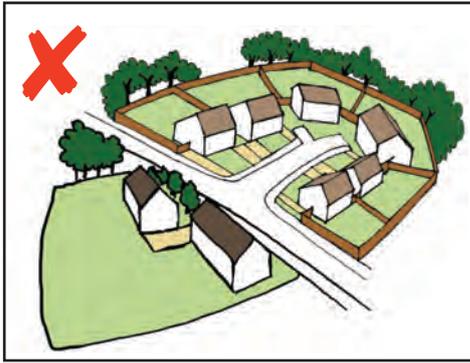
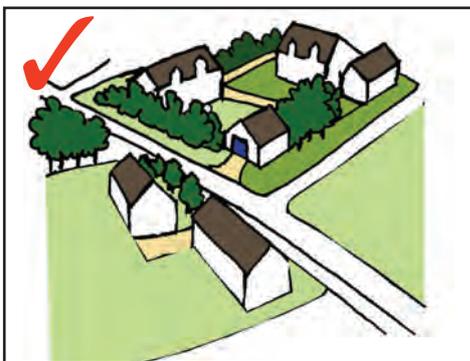


Diagram 1: 6 stages of building remains***Additional New Build Accompanying a Reuse or Rehabilitation Scheme***

The number of additional new build units will not exceed the number of converted or rehabilitated dwellings and no more than 50% of new build units can be built before the conversion is complete. Exceptions to this will only be considered where evidence is submitted which demonstrated that the application of an alternative unit or threshold would enable the reuse or rehabilitation scheme. For example, where the building is converted into 3 dwellings, only 3 additional new build units will be allowed. Development must be contained within the curtilage of the existing building(s) and not extend into previously undeveloped land (i.e. an adjacent field).



Poorly designed developments have a greater impact on their landscape settings as they look out of place and unlike traditional patterns of development in the locality.



Low key, informal groups of dwellings that derive their distribution from neighbouring properties and are integrated with their setting have much less impact on their landscape.

The converted/rehabilitated dwellings and additional new build units must together form a cohesive grouping through built form, layout and landscaping. This should reflect the character of existing traditional buildings and clusters in the surrounding area. As set out above, where the buildings are poorly integrated in their landscape, there will be a requirement to plant 25% of the site with native species trees, at least 1.5 metres in height.

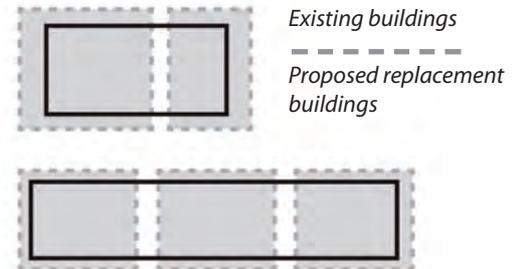
Replacement

A complete replacement of a previous building in the countryside (equivalent to level 2 in diagram 1) will be acceptable where it sits on at least part of the footprint of the previous building and complies with the design criteria of policy H7, IMP1 and the design considerations set out in this guidance. Where there are multiple houses being proposed, each of the dwellings must sit on at least part of the footprint of the building they are replacing. The number of houses being proposed must not exceed the conversion potential of the original building they are replacing. For example, if the building could be split into 3 dwellings, only 3 new dwellings will be permitted.

Buildings in the countryside may be a substantial size given their functional justification for being

there. In these circumstances, the number of new dwellings permitted may not necessarily equate to the footprint of the building they are replacing as this level of development is likely to lead to a build-up of development to the detriment of the rural character of the area and should be directed to existing rural groupings.

The replacement of some structures by virtue of their construction or use may not be acceptable. For example, corrugated-iron stores, wooden sheds, and bale stores (i.e. buildings without fully enclosing walls)



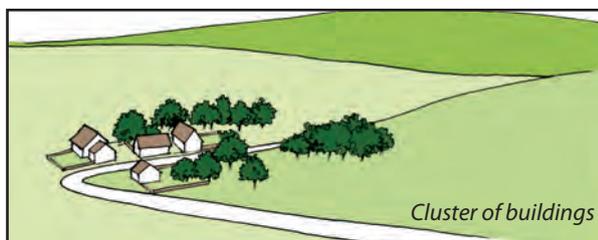
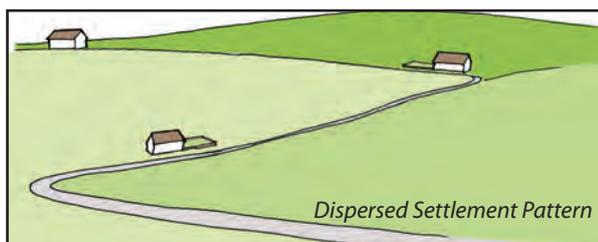
Structures such as bale stores will not qualify for replacement dwellings



lifespan. Cattle sheds are built for functional purposes and due to their size and location are often not suitable for housing development.

Where a number of new dwellings are proposed to replace a building(s), they must be cohesively grouped together through built form, layout and landscape features in a manner that reflects the character of existing traditional buildings and clusters in the surrounding area. Low-key, informal clusters of buildings that

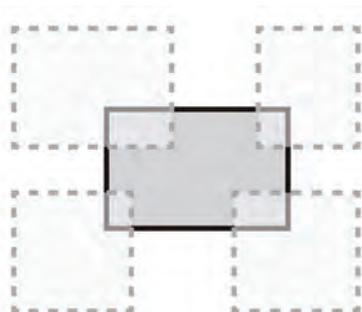
derive their distribution/juxtaposition from the way that neighbouring traditional properties are located relative to each other can help to minimise the impact of new buildings on the landscape. The dwellings must be contained within the curtilage of the building(s) they are replacing and must not extend into previously undeveloped land.



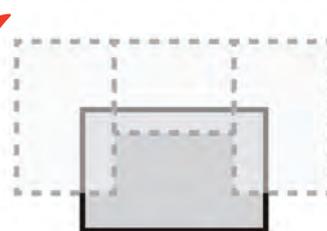
The proposed replacement dwelling(s) will be assessed against the traditional settlement pattern of the locality. Where this is characterised by small clusters of houses, a new cluster to replace existing building(s) may be acceptable. Similarly, a single dwelling to replace an existing building(s) within a dispersed settlement pattern may also be acceptable. However, such proposals may not be acceptable where their cumulative effect is considered to result in a build-up of development that detrimentally impacts on the rural character of the area. Therefore, a cluster of new houses within an area typified by such a settlement pattern may not always be appropriate.

New buildings must be sensitively integrated within the landscape. Where the site lacks natural features or existing planting, the proposal will need to be accompanied by a plan showing 25% of the site to be planted with native species trees, at least 1.5 metres in height.

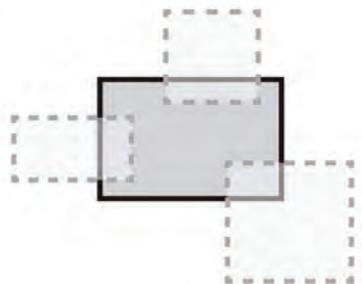
Replacement dwellings must be cohesively grouped together and reflect the traditional built form in the surrounding area.



Suburban Layout



Courtyard Development



Farm Building Group

BASIC RULES

The basic rules for the renovation of countryside buildings are:

Form – maintain the existing form and shape of the original dwelling, e.g. do not mix flat roofs and pitched roofs.

Scale – the extension should be subservient to the original building, i.e. it should not be of a scale that overwhelms the original house or causes an unreasonable loss of daylight, privacy, etc to neighbouring dwellings.

Siting – site the extension so as to maintain the balance of the original building, i.e. locate the extension to the rear or side of the original building.

Design – maintain the style of the original dwelling and character of the location, i.e. doors, windows and openings should be designed to compliment the form and proportions of the original building.

(iii) Design Considerations

Re-use

The re-use or rehabilitation of existing buildings in the countryside will usually take the form of renovation or conversion.

Renovation

Rural buildings range in type from formally planned home farms of large estates to more simple vernacular forms. Farmhouses would usually be associated with buildings for processing and storing crops, housing machinery, and feeding and raising livestock. The buildings were generally of linear form with pitched roofs. The buildings often expanded through the addition of rooms to the rear or side of the original building or upwards, making use of roof space. One and a half storey houses with pitched dormers are a traditional feature of houses in Moray.

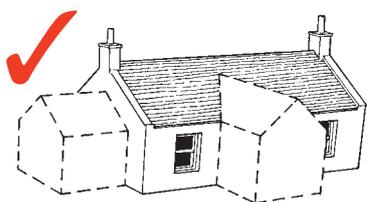
Extensions and alterations to buildings should respect the traditional form of the original building. Extensions should generally be located to the rear or side of the original building. Extensions should be subordinate to the original building to ensure the character and appearance of the original building is not overwhelmed. This will allow the character of the old and new to be expressed. Roofs and dormers should be pitched and be in proportion with the windows below. Unless there are unusual ground conditions, the roofline of the extension should be no higher than that of the main building. The use of flat roofs and box dormers should be avoided. The materials and style of the extension and alterations should respect the character of the original building and traditional buildings in the vicinity. The prime objective of renovation is to revitalise the original building without materially altering its character.



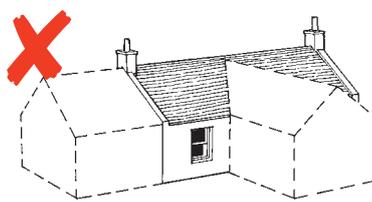
House designed as a series of massing to reflect traditional plan form.



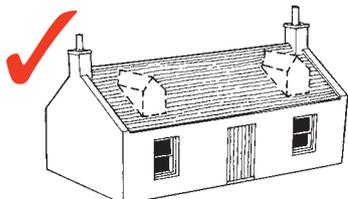
Extensions and Alterations to Buildings



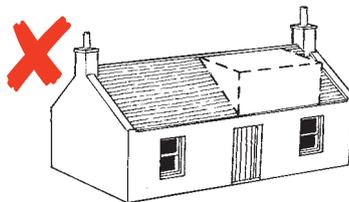
Pitched roofs are always preferable to flat roofs when traditional cottages and farm houses are being extended. An effective means of making a side extension subservient to the original is to set it back from the existing building line. This minimizes the problem of obtaining a good match of old and new materials and eliminates unsightly bonding.



Roof pitch and gable width should not dominate the original building.



Traditional dormer windows are usually quite small and neat structures designed and positioned with careful proportions.



This type of roof extension would ruin the appearance of any traditional dwelling; its size, flat roof, large window area and positioning are all alien features to local traditional buildings.

Conversion

The design approach to conversion work must be handled sensitively as many buildings display direct links to estate architecture, which is historically associated with the Moray area. The prime objective of any conversion project must be to retain the external character of the building.

There are many non-residential buildings within Moray that are capable of conversion to residential use. These include buildings associated with agriculture such as steadings, outbuildings and barns; buildings of an industrial nature such as mills and granaries; and, buildings built for religious and educational purposes such as churches and schools.

As a general rule, buildings constructed for agricultural purposes such as farm steadings are strong, unfussy structures. Any conversion should make use of existing openings wherever possible so that new windows and doors are kept to a minimum. All windows and doors should be simple and sturdily built, and existing cart shed openings, ventilator slots, distinctive detailing and any important ancillary structures such as horse engine rooms should be retained.

BASIC RULES

The basic rules for conversion of buildings in the countryside are:

- Retention of the original character of the building.
- Structural alterations must be kept to a minimum.
- Extensions and new-build must only be contemplated where they reinforce the architectural integrity of the building.
- All new doors and windows must be sensitively added and unnecessary projections avoided.
- Special care must be taken with buildings of obvious architectural distinction, e.g. churches, estate steadings and listed buildings, etc.

The addition of barge boards, gutterboards or any other unnecessary external features should be avoided. Modern tiles should not replace slate.

Extensions or new build should only be contemplated where they reinforce the architectural integrity of the existing steading by, for example, infilling inappropriate gaps in a group or rounding off a group. Projections above the existing roof ridgeline, raising ridges or eaves should be avoided and introducing porches and new dormers are only appropriate where the applicant has demonstrated that such changes are sympathetically designed and that no reasonable alternative exists to achieve the conversion. Bay or oriel windows along with conservatories are difficult to successfully integrate because they have no previous association with agricultural buildings. These must be planned with great care.



Open courtyards must not be subdivided by fences or other structures but should be held in common as one space, with simple details and material finishes appropriate to steading courts. Traditional courtyard finishes such as cobbles, sets and central walled or sunken areas are best retained and repaired where possible.

The conversion of industrial buildings such as mills and granaries and religious buildings such as churches may be difficult to adapt to domestic use due to their scale. However, in a similar manner to agricultural buildings the character of the original building must be retained whereby the historical use of the building is evident. External alterations should be avoided and new development restricted to within the existing shell of the building. Specific features such as lades, water wheels, louvred windows, cart shed openings, etc in industrial buildings and gothic windows and doors, stained glass, vaulted ceilings, etc in churches must be retained, where possible. If a new floor is to be added internally this should not be at the expense of disrupting windows and door openings.

The conversion of educational buildings such as schools to domestic properties should require minimal alteration. The retention of the integrity of the original architectural design is the prime objective. Many rural schools are of a domestic scale and their conversion should not pose major structural problems. Window proportions and style should be retained and external alteration kept to a minimum.



Replacement

Where an existing building is not capable of renovation or conversion, a replacement dwelling may be acceptable. The replacement house must respect the scale and form of traditional houses in the local area. Where replacement is proposed for a number of buildings grouped together (e.g. a farm steading), the proposed group of new houses will be assessed against the dominant settlement pattern in the locality as a cluster of new houses to replace an existing cluster of buildings may not be appropriate.

A dwelling of a size significantly in excess of the dwelling it is replacing or of traditional properties in the local area will not be acceptable. The dwelling must be located on at least part of the footprint of the building it is replacing.

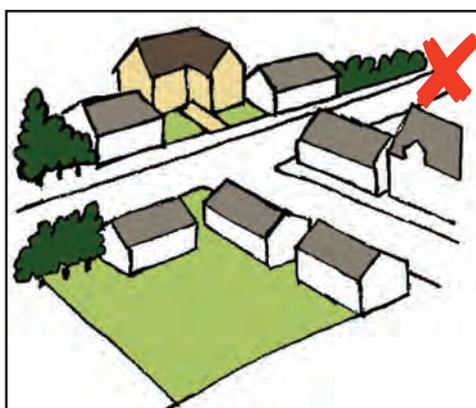
Additional New Build associated with a Re-use or Rehabilitation Scheme

Where additional new dwellings are permitted under the terms of policy H6 as part of a rehabilitation scheme, the design requirements of policy H7 apply. (Section 4 vii) of this guidance will also apply to all new houses in the countryside, irrespective of whether they are considered as part of a rehabilitation scheme under policy H6 or as a standalone house under policy H7.

*Traditional Farmhouse and outbuildings
1 and a half storey pitch and dorma.*



A replacement house must respect the scale and form of traditional houses in the area.



New build that reflects the traditional character of vernacular build will be acceptable. For example a vertical emphasis, 45° degree pitch, appropriate materials and simple, but classic details that are non fussy.



BASIC RULES

The basic rules for the design of new houses in the countryside, specifically where they result in small groups or clusters of developments are set out below:

- Respect the traditional pattern of settlement in the locality;
- Integrate a sensitive, low-key, cohesive development within the landscape setting within which it sits;
- Consider the form, scale and massing of the buildings – new build should not overwhelm or dominate the original building so as to maintain the historical connection with the area
- Materials and proportions should reflect and complement traditional properties in the locality – pastiche development and suburban characteristics must be avoided; contemporary design based on traditional characteristics must be introduced and encouraged;
- Landscaping and rural boundary treatments should be used to integrate the new development within its setting;
- Use the landscape and site the building(s) to be energy efficient.

Contemporary, modern design based on the vernacular will be acceptable.
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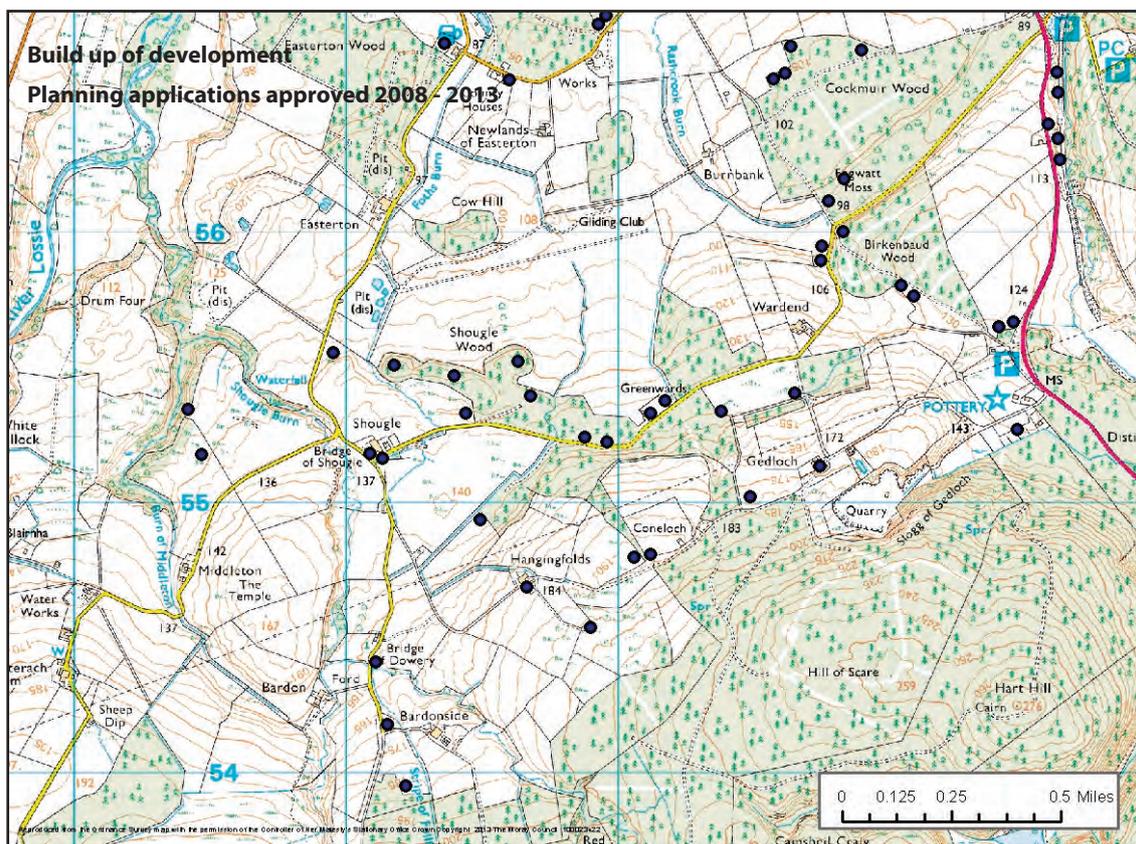


4 POLICY H7: New Housing in the Open Countryside

Proposals for new houses in the open countryside that do not include the replacement or reuse of an existing building will be primarily considered against policy H7 of the LDP. The following sub-sections provide guidance on the key aspects of the policy.

(i) The traditional pattern of settlement & build-up of development

The traditional pattern of settlement means the arrangement of vernacular buildings in the locality. It does not include buildings of modern construction. The traditional pattern of settlement varies across Moray. A rural area can be characterised by small clusters of buildings or individual houses dispersed throughout the countryside. It is important that the location of a new house reflects the traditional pattern of settlement in order that development relates to the long-established building arrangement in the vicinity and that the rural identity of Moray is retained. A new dwelling that is positioned sensitively within a cluster of existing buildings or adopts the spacing of a dispersed pattern of settlement will generally be acceptable.



Whilst a proposal may reflect the traditional pattern of settlement it may not always be appropriate. A proposal that contributes to a build-up of development that is considered to undermine the rural character of the locality will not be acceptable. Where a considerable level of development has taken place, another dwelling may adversely impact on the distinctive rural qualities of the area (e.g. open appearance or ambience). For example, successive applications for houses in the corner of fields within a dispersed pattern of settlement may be considered to detrimentally alter the character of the locality. Whilst this may reflect the dispersed pattern of settlement the volume of new houses may impact on the open appearance and tranquil qualities of the rural area.

Similarly, successive applications for houses within wooded areas may detrimentally change the rural character of an area. Whilst hidden from view by trees, the cumulative impact of such proposals can alter the rural character and ambience of an area. Increased traffic movements, road junctions, bin collections, etc. can urbanise the countryside and erode its tranquil qualities.



There has been a significant growth in the number of new house applications in specific areas of Moray. Proposals for further development in these areas will be given particular attention in terms of contributing to build-up that could irreversibly alter the character in the locality. These areas include:

- Mosstowie;
- Birnie;
- Stoneyton;
- The Grange;
- Craigellachie;
- Rafford;
- Dunphail;
- Mains of Craigmill;
- Wardend.

Obtrusive development



Artificially elevated ground, i.e. mounding



Intrusion on the skyline

(ii) Obtrusive development

An obtrusive structure means that it is designed or situated in a position where it would have a negative impact on the landscape or character of the area. Development that is obtrusive usually occupies an open 'elevated' position with no discernable backdrop or enclosure within reasonable proximity. Examples include on a skyline/top of ridge, artificially elevated ground or in an open setting such as the central area of a field or flat plateau.

Development located adjacent a main route will be prominent in the landscape by virtue of its high visibility to a significant number of people. These proposals need to be sensitively designed, sited and integrated with the landscape to ensure they are not obtrusive and irreversibly harm the rural character of the area.

Proposals that work with the surrounding landform using site contours and natural backdrops will be more successful at integrating sensitively with their landscape setting. A building whose scale and structure reflects the topography of the landform and uses a backdrop of trees for shelter will generally reflect the situation of traditional buildings in the countryside and is less likely to look out of place. Development may be noticeable within the landscape but must not dominate it.

Planting can help minimise the impact of a building on the landscape. Proposals should use natural backdrops, such as woodlands, and new planting within the plot to sensitively integrate with the landscape. The permanency of wooded backdrops will be taken into consideration in the determination of a planning application. For example, the felling of a commercial plantation may make an otherwise unobtrusive development obtrusive by exposing the house on a skyline. Where it is considered that the existing (including wooded backdrops) and new planting will not alleviate a detrimental impact on the landscape the proposal will be refused.

Impact of removal of backdrop of trees



Unobtrusive development becomes obtrusive with the removal of its backdrop.

(iii) Impact on the character and setting of existing buildings

A proposal for a new house must not detract from the character or setting of existing buildings or their surrounding area when added to an existing cluster. This means that the siting of a new building must form a logical part of the existing cluster and not have the appearance of being 'added on'. New buildings can successfully integrate with an existing cluster where careful attention is paid to layout, built form and landscaping taking cognisance and incorporating the characteristics of neighbouring traditional properties. Suburban features that are alien to the rural environment will not be acceptable.

Suburban characteristics are inappropriate in a rural environment



- low roof pitch (less than 40-45°),
- deep building footprint,
- horizontal glazing proportion,
- excessive soffit overhang and fascia boards,
- integrated garages and fussy details.

The cumulative impact of an additional house(s) to an existing cluster and the surrounding area will be taken into consideration. Where the proposal is deemed to detrimentally impact on the character of the cluster, the traditional pattern of settlement in the area, and/or lead to an unacceptable build-up of development in the locality it will not be acceptable. For example, the additional dwelling may have the appearance of being disjointed from the existing cluster, result in a size that does not reflect other clusters in the locality or detrimentally alter the rural character of the area.

(iv) Ribbon development

Ribbon development will not be acceptable where it results in an accumulation of houses along a road or landscape feature. Infill development that is unobtrusive and reflects the traditional pattern of settlement in the area will generally be acceptable provided it does not lead to a build-up of development in the locality. Infill development that adds to existing obtrusive development (i.e. on a skyline) will not be appropriate.



(v) Site boundaries

Policy H7 requires that at least 50% of the site boundaries of a proposal are long established, and are capable of distinguishing the site from surrounding land. Examples include dykes, hedgerows, watercourses, woodlands, tracks and roadways. Newly formed fencing, e.g. post and wire, hedgerows that have been recently planted, and tracks that have been recently formed (i.e. through fields) will not constitute a site boundary for the purposes of this definition as they are not long-established.

Site Boundaries



Newly formed post and wire fencing



Stone dyke



Recently formed track



Long-established track

(vi) Trees

Policy H7 stipulates a requirement of 25% of the plot area to be planted with native species trees to help integrate new buildings with their landscape settings. In general, a building set against a backdrop of trees is one of the most successful ways of blending new development with the landscape. The 25% planting requirement will not negate the need for a backdrop to be present or behind a site at the time of consideration of a development proposal, given the length of time it can take for trees or shrubs to mature enough to be a meaningful backdrop to a new house. Traditional buildings in the countryside are often located in close proximity to woodlands or a belt of trees to provide shelter. Exceptions may apply where a new house situated adjacent to an area of attractive woodland (such as an ancient woodland or AGLV) may be intrusive. In these circumstances, new dwellings are unlikely to be acceptable.



Planting and trees help to integrate a new house into its landscape setting

25% of the plot area must be under tree cover with all new planting in native species trees, at least 1.5 metres in height. A tree survey, where mature native species trees are likely to be affected, should be carried out in accordance with the advice in the Council's supplementary guidance, "Trees and Development", to categorise any trees to be retained and integrated into the development and those that are to be removed. Non-native specimen trees identified through the tree survey for retention within the plot area can contribute towards the 25% planting requirement. Advice on tree survey requirements, tree protection and tree selection is set out in the aforementioned guidance.

The primary purpose of the planting is to integrate the proposed house within its landscape setting. The planting is a requirement of policy H7 and cannot be used as a mitigating factor to justify otherwise invasive or obtrusive development. Wherever possible, a selection of different native tree species should make up the 25% area. The selection should be appropriate to the location. When preparing the landscaping scheme for a new plot, a balance needs to be struck between aesthetic considerations, the characteristics and requirements of the trees and other material considerations such as the potential for solar gain, and the occupier's reasonable prospects of enjoyment of their property.



A mix of native species trees with varying canopy covers and growth rates should ensure that the building remains integrated with the landscape as faster growing trees with shorter life spans, such as birch, are taken over by slower growing trees with longer life spans, such as oak. Depending on existing trees to be retained within the plot and the characteristics of the site, a reasonable number of new trees will be expected to reach early maturity within 5-10 years of the completion of the building. Furthermore, a reasonable amount of trees, taking into account rate of growth and



mature canopy cover, must be planted to satisfy the 25% planting requirement. A few trees with a canopy cover expected at maturity to equate to 25% of the plot area will not be acceptable given the period of time this would take to establish.

Where a commercial plantation provides a backdrop of trees to a new building, new planting within the curtilage of the dwelling will still be required to ensure that a backdrop of trees is maintained should the plantation be felled. Without adequate planting, an otherwise prominent site may become obtrusive in the landscape when its plantation backdrop is removed.

(vii) Design Considerations

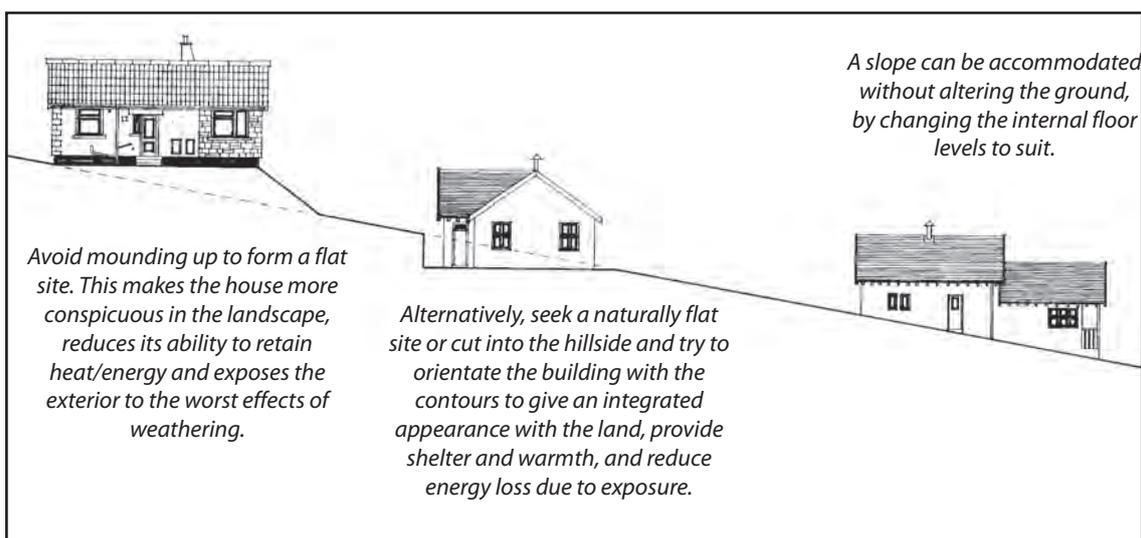
Policy H7 sets out the design requirements for new houses in the countryside. This applies to all new build houses whether they form part of a rehabilitation scheme (Policy H6) or are a standalone house (Policy H7). The guidance provides advice on the three critical elements of successfully integrating new development with the countryside: location, siting and design.

Location

It is important when choosing a site for a new house that it will be sustainable in the long-term. This means that the following factors must be taken into account in site selection:

- The need for shelter through natural and built features. Avoid locations that use a ridge or hill-top as these are exposed and generally obtrusive to the landscape in which they sit. Sites that are sheltered are less exposed to weathering thereby reducing future maintenance costs and heating bills.
- Utilise solar gain and natural ventilation. For example, maximise southerly solar gain by using a high proportion of wall glazing to the south with good insulation to the north of the building or use roof solar panels to take advantage of solar gain. Diagram 2 shows how to use the natural elements when planning the location of a new building to your advantage.

Working with the contours of your site

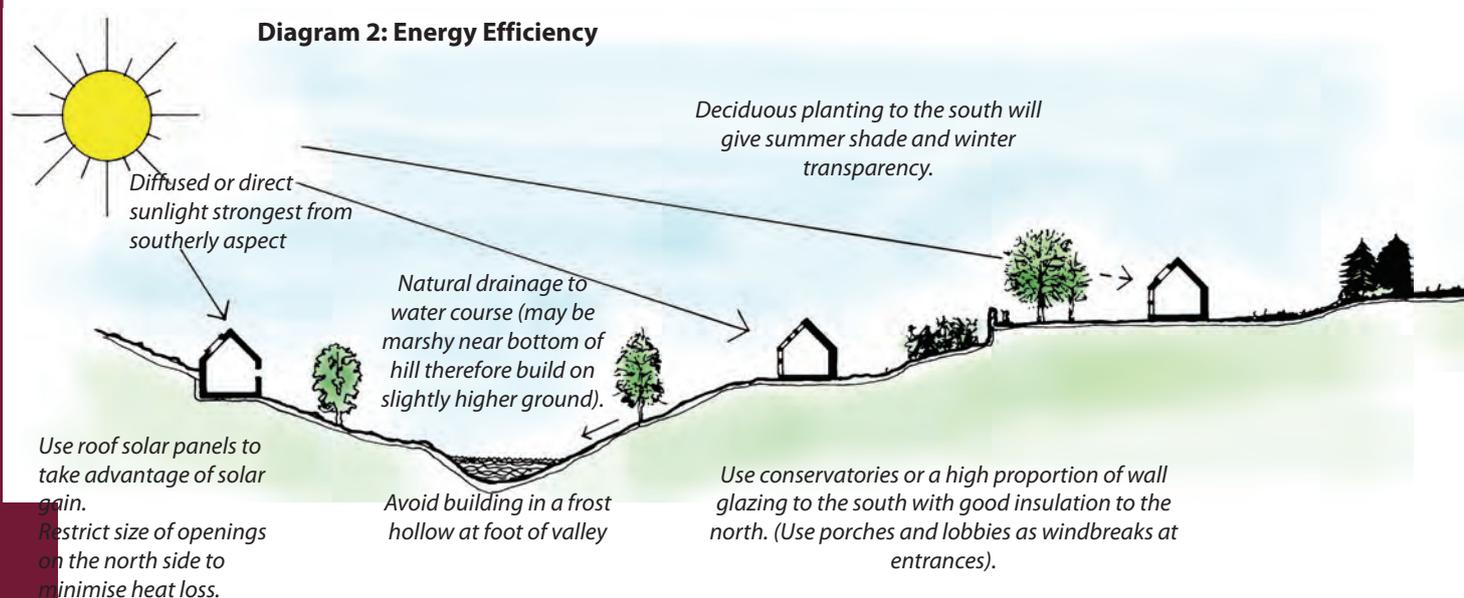


- Choose an unobtrusive site, which has development potential but is not conspicuous. Consider slightly different positions within the same general area to create a sympathetic site for a new house, for example, locate below the ridge line, use trees or hills as a backdrop, or take advantage of other natural features. In the open countryside, seek a naturally flat site that avoids the need to build a platform, or if locating beside an existing building, choose a site that will integrate the new house as part of a cluster of buildings.

Siting

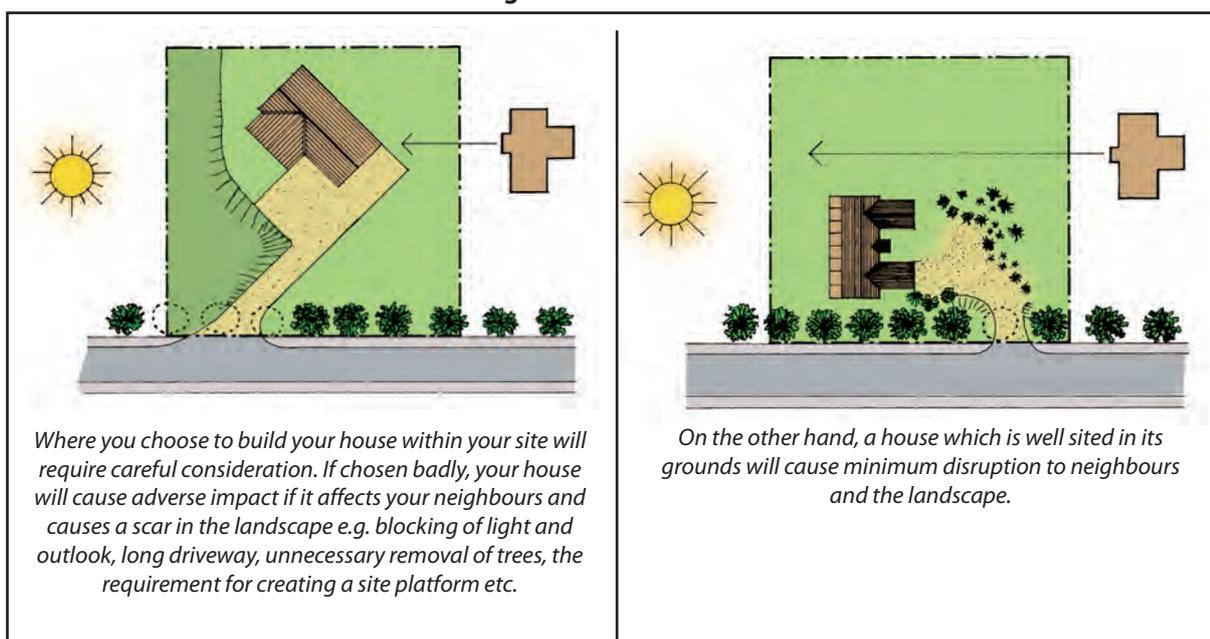
Placing a new house within its site boundaries is as important as selecting an appropriate location in the landscape. The landscape of Moray must remain the dominant visual feature and any new development must appear appropriate to its setting. The following factors must be taken into account when considering the siting of a new house in the countryside:

- Work with the contours of the site. Avoid mounding up to form a flat site as this makes the house more conspicuous in the landscape, reduces its ability to retain heat/energy and exposes the exterior to the worst effects of weathering. Establish where excavation or underbuilding would be an advantage.
- Consider how to orientate the building to obtain an outlook and achieve shelter, direct sunlight and natural warmth within and immediately around the house. Often the positioning of older houses in the surrounding countryside provide information as to how these aspects have been dealt with in the past, and the degree to which they have been successful. For example, shelterbelts of trees often indicate problems of exposure. The traditional form of development has usually been dictated by the environment and how to overcome problems of exposure, etc. By siting new houses in a similar manner, the traditional pattern and form of houses in the countryside is retained as well as responding to environmental problems.
- Note any trees or shrubs, etc within, and on the boundary of the site which can be retained as they will help to lessen the 'raw' appearance of a new site, and can reduce the extent of new planting and landscaping required. Any new planting will be of native tree species appropriate to the location.



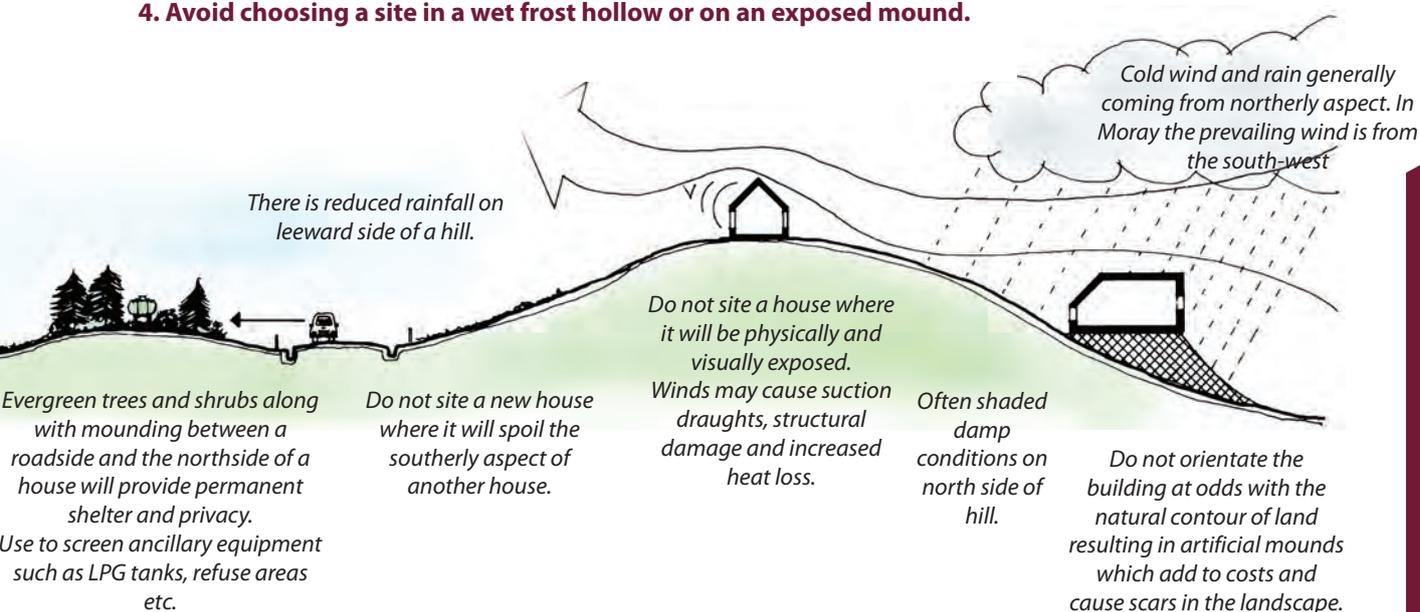
- Take account of the exposure of sites to winds and sunlight, and try to achieve adequate shelter naturally, and not depend on high walls or artificial-looking windbreaks.
- Examine the relationship of the site to the proposed access road. Avoid the need to create long lengths of new road (which can create a scarring effect for many years). Try to achieve a degree of privacy when viewed from the road through planting.
- Site buildings in order that they can grow, i.e. allow adequate space for future extensions, garages, outbuildings, etc within the plot.

Placing Your House in Your Site



General principles:-

- 1. Maximise southerly solar gain, minimise northerly heat loss.**
- 2. Maximise the use of trees for shelter, privacy, air cleaning etc.**
- 3. Find a suitable natural site rather than artificially create one.**
- 4. Avoid choosing a site in a wet frost hollow or on an exposed mound.**



- Ensure boundary treatments are appropriate to the area. Use local, traditional materials and/or planting to enclose the site. Avoid the use of fencing, decorative walling or 'garden centre features' such as ornamental paving as these can alter the rural character of the area.



Design

In recent times, there has been a general acceptance of extremely unimaginative standards of domestic 'rural' house design. The incremental increase of standard suburban houses that are alien to a rural setting are gradually eroding the distinctive rural house design and character of the Moray countryside.

Tinkering with design features such as windows, materials, colours, etc is superficial and will not address the real problem; the design of the catalogue bungalow is fundamentally alien to traditional rural design.



Applicants and agencies must recognise this and work with the planning authority to restore the direction of modern domestic rural architecture in Moray.

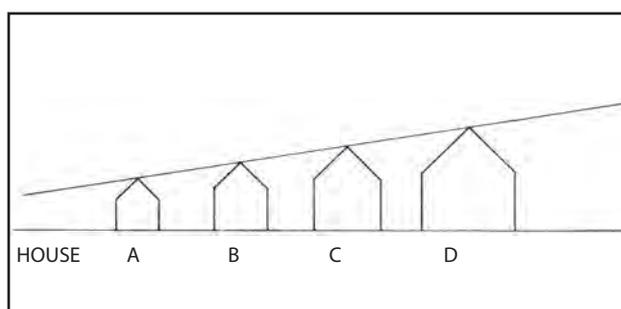
The introduction, evolution and widespread use of kit houses has moved design further away from rural characteristics. Kit houses are largely aimed at the suburban UK market, and pay no particular regard to Scottish characteristics although they may be marketed with a Scottish name. However, kit houses can be easily adapted to provide a product fit for rural situations. A number of companies are now showing interest in developing a range of designs more suited to the local rural market. This approach is very much welcomed.



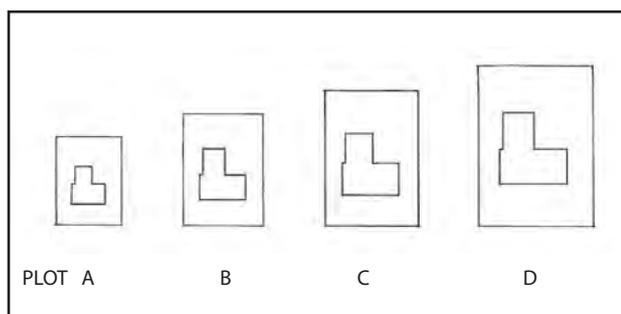
Scale

Scale is a key consideration in the design of a new house in the countryside; a building's size must suit the landscape in which it sits, its surroundings and the house type.

Firstly, a building's size must be relative to its landscape. Larger buildings are unlikely to be compatible with small enclosed landscapes due to their impact, i.e. the larger the house the greater its impact on its surroundings. Larger houses are usually more suited to large open areas where the house can be absorbed by the landscape. Larger houses should continue to be low-impact in that they are single or one and a half storey of simple form, with L, H or T shaped footprints. Two storey dwellings are not a common feature in the Moray landscape. Applicants may have difficulty finding a suitable site for a larger house, and may have to change to a smaller scale house.



Secondly, a building's size must be relative to its surroundings, i.e. neighbouring buildings. An out-of-scale house can be visually and physically intrusive as well as create privacy and overshadowing issues for neighbouring properties. For example, House D would have an intimidating impact if placed alongside House A.



Thirdly, a building's size must be relative to its plot size, i.e. larger buildings need larger sites. Rural buildings have traditionally had generous plot sizes in comparison to town buildings. Although modern buildings in the countryside have generally been of a larger scale than traditionally found in the countryside, the spirit of spacious grounds must be upheld in order to retain the character of the countryside. For example, placing House D into plot A would be out-of-scale for a rural situation. The solution would be to increase the plot size or to decrease the house size.



Form

In rural Moray, comparatively low buildings are generally sympathetic to the lines of the landscape. Occasionally, (as a reflection of local tradition), a simply designed two storey house is acceptable. Plans based on more narrow rectangles with gabled (or occasionally hipped) roofs are more satisfactory and will be acceptable. Large houses should be designed as a series of elements in terms of

massing to reflect traditional plan form. Plans with a square form with shallow pitched roofs reflect more of the traits of suburban architecture and will not be acceptable. The shape and massing of new buildings in the countryside should be taken from the nature of the landscape and surrounding buildings.

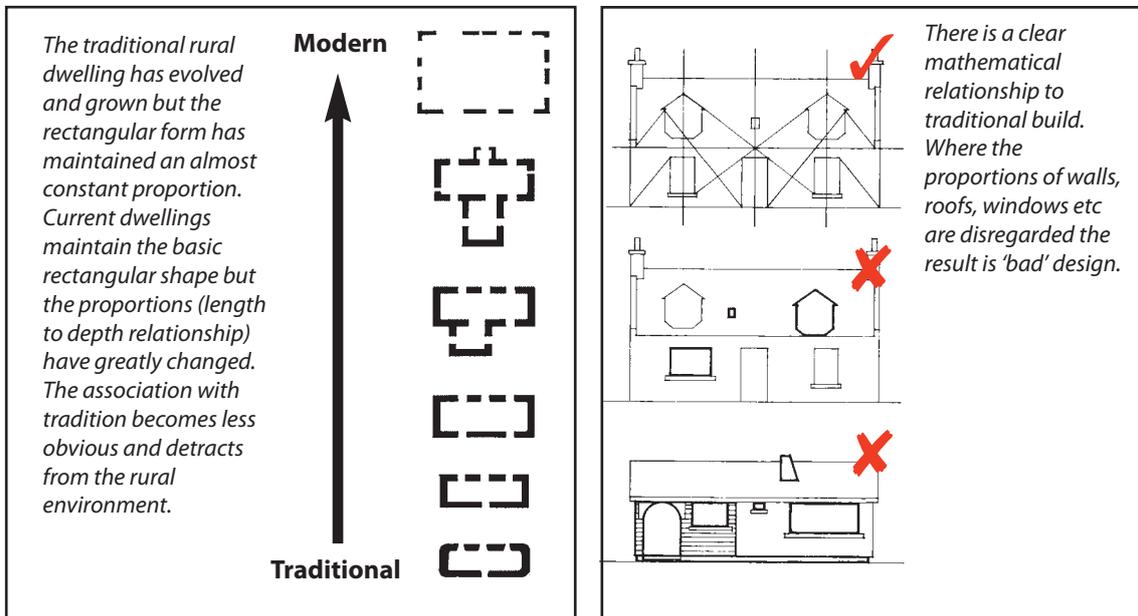
Innovative designs will be acceptable provided they relate to the landscape in which they sit, i.e. they do not overwhelm the rural setting and are truly inspirational.

Proportion

Proportion is a basic design concept. It is the measurement of something to something else, i.e. length to breadth. Where a building has 'good proportions' it is often considered to be well-designed, providing the scale of the building is correct, as the relationship of the heights and widths of walls and roofs, along with the size and positioning of openings and projections (i.e. windows, doors, chimneys, dormers, etc) are in harmony with one another.

'Poor proportions' often result in 'bad design'. This is often due to emphasis being placed on the internal arrangement of the building and the client's individual tastes.

To understand proportion, is to understand existing buildings. In general, proportions are simply and invariably based on symmetry. An understanding of these proportions will reveal that whilst individuality is achievable, unity is still maintained.



Traditional venacular footprint

The positioning and shape of windows, given they are the main openings of a building, are key elements in achieving balance and good proportions. As with the building itself, windows should maintain a disciplined proportion to each other, both in terms of the opening's relationship to the shape of the building, and the individual glass pane's relationship to the opening.

The Georgian period perfected balanced fenestration in windows in all types and sizes of houses. These basic shapes are found in traditional cottages and croft houses.

Appropriate modern windows should maintain these simple design standards and good proportions. Rural buildings are of a simple form therefore windows should be likewise and not decorative features.

Materials

The materials and colours of a building are an important consideration in the design of a new house in the countryside as they will help to integrate the building into the local landscape. In the design of a new house in the countryside, account must be taken of the materials and colours of traditional buildings in the area as this creates the local character.

Traditional finishes in Moray are buff sandstone (sometimes red sandstone, grey granite, blue whinstone, mica schist) stone or dark blue slate, white lime harling, dark red pantiles, painted wood and sometimes painted corrugate iron. Locally appropriate, traditional materials and colours should be used as imported finishes that differ in colour and texture may be too striking in contrast to traditional buildings and will not integrate with ease. A drydash finish may be appropriate, however, the use of white should be avoided as this can be very eye catching in a rural environment. The overall colour, tone and texture in main walls and roofs must be in harmony and relate, in their total effect, to the prevailing tints of buildings in the area.

Traditional Finishes

Walls	Buff sandstone (sometimes red sandstone, grey granite, blue whinstone, mica schist), white lime harling
Roofs	Stone or dark blue slate, dark red pantiles
Other finishes	Painted wood or corrugated iron

Unless a building's design is of the highest quality, i.e. it is a landmark building, a more traditional choice of materials and colours should be used so that the development is sensitive to its environment.

Clean, simple, uncluttered lines are often the distinguishing characteristics of a successful approach to rural building. Embellishments such as heavy barge boards, fake stone panels, and wrought 'iron' features should be avoided as they do not reflect the architecture of rural buildings. For example, an arch, which has no load to carry or, an imitation stone façade incorporating a wide opening, could not be achieved if the façade was constructed of real stone.

Provided a development proposal adheres and exemplifies the above criteria in terms of location, siting and design, dwellings will be constructed that truly reflect their rural setting.

Other Design Considerations

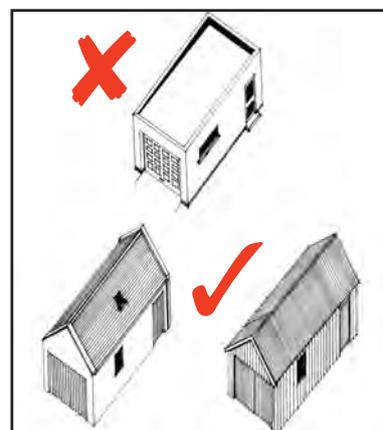
Ancillary features of a new house are an important design consideration; they must be considered from the outset as an integral part of the development rather than be an afterthought. Examples of ancillary features include subsidiary buildings (garages, etc), road entrance, ground surfaces and site boundaries.

Access and Boundaries

Every effort must be made to preserve as much of the natural boundaries and features of the road frontage. This will be dependent on road safety standards and in particular traffic and sight line requirements, for which reference should be made to the Moray Council document entitled 'Transportation Requirements for Small Developments in Rural Parts of Moray'. The extent and treatment of the 'break' in the road verge will govern how much attention is drawn to a new dwelling in the countryside.

Garages

Poor positioning of a garage in relation to the main elevation of the house can make the requirements of the car appear to be dominant to those of the household. Integral garages with complimentary roof pitches can be successful and in most cases the garage should be sited away from the front elevation. Detached garages can provide shelter to the main house if sited carefully.



Detached garages are more appropriate to a countryside location as this reduces the overall mass of the building



External Fittings and Lighting

Outside lighting is often an essential requirement of rural housing for reason of accessibility and security, but it can also be responsible for light pollution, energy wastage and blindness for road users if not used wisely. External lighting should, therefore, be directed downwards and make effective use of sensor switches. Permanent lighting, e.g. floodlit entrances, driveways and buildings, is discouraged. Light fittings should be plain and simple in design. Fittings to buildings, such as satellite dishes, should be located in unobtrusive positions.

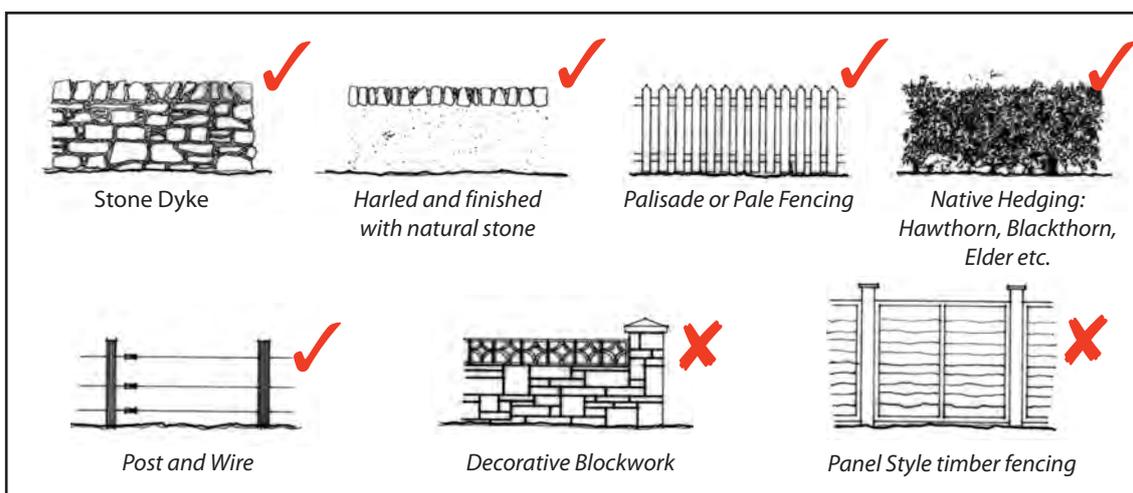
Walls and Fences

The design and type of materials used for means of enclosure and boundary demarcation is an important design element for ensuring that new house sites successfully integrate with their locations in the countryside.

Simple post and rail or post and wire fencing is suitable for most rural locations and painted or stained palisade fencing can suit a 'rural community' location. Panel style timber fencing generally looks out of place in Moray and must be avoided.

Walls are best in natural stone (particularly in the east and south of Moray) but can be of harled blockwork with natural stone coping. Ornate concrete screen walling is a feature of modern suburban areas and must be avoided.

Gate piers, walls, fences or hedges must be kept to the rear of the visibility splay area, or if that is not possible, must not obstruct the sight lines (a height of less than 0.85metres is acceptable). Cattle grids if provided must be located outwith the public road boundary.



Appropriate materials and detailing for the rural environment



Inappropriate materials and detailing for the rural environment



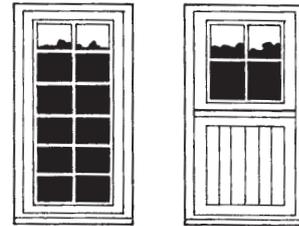
Windows and Doors



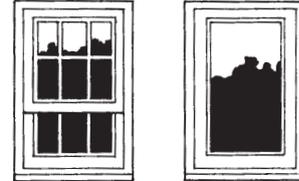
Modern windows should maintain simple design standards and good proportions.



Designs should reflect the shape of the opening. Arches should only be employed if the opening itself is curved.



Avoid asymmetrical designs in both the horizontal and vertical planes.



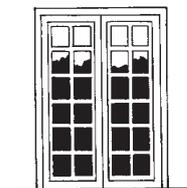
New openings are generally discouraged in converted or renovated buildings, but if they must be used they should be of the same size and proportions as the existing openings.



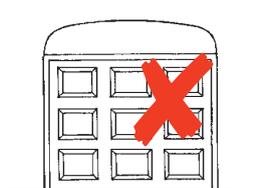
In all instances windows and doors should be simple designs preferably constructed in timber.



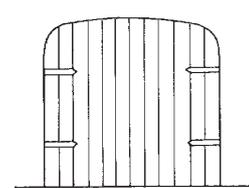
Avoid asymmetrical designs.



Avoid the use of elaborate designs either on the door or the glass itself.



Doors should fully reflect the shape of the opening.



APPENDIX 1: EXTRACT OF POLICY H6 & POLICY H7 OF THE MORAY LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2015

Policy H6

Re-use & Replacement of Existing Buildings in the Countryside

The re-use and replacement of existing buildings in the countryside for housing will be acceptable if:

- a) There is clear physical evidence of a previous building, using the equivalent of level 2 as depicted in diagram 1, where the full extent of the building is clearly established; and,
- b) The proposed house(s) sits on at least part of the footprint of the previous building(s). The number of houses shall not exceed the conversion potential of the original building (e.g. if the building could be split into 3 units, no more than 3 replacement dwellings will be permitted).

Where new build is proposed along with a re-use or rehabilitation scheme, it must:

- i) Comprise only a limited number of new build units not exceeding the number of converted or replacement dwellings;
- ii) No more than 50% of new build units can be built before the conversion is complete;
- iii) Be contained within the curtilage of the existing building site and must not extend into previously undeveloped land;
- iv) Create a cohesive grouping through built form, layout and landscape features that reflects the character of the existing buildings and surrounding area;
- v) Comply with the design requirements of policy H7 (New Housing in the Open Countryside); and,
- vi) Incorporate stonework and salvaged material, wherever practicable.

Variations to i) and ii) above will only be considered where evidence is submitted which demonstrates, to the satisfaction of the Council, that application of an alternative limit or threshold would enable the re-use or rehabilitation scheme.

Exceptions to design requirements will only be justified on the basis of innovative designs that respond to the character and setting of the house group.

Where complete replacement of substantially intact stone and slate buildings, such as churches, mills, farmhouses, granaries and schools, etc is being proposed, the Council will require the submission of evidence to their satisfaction as to why conversion or renovation is not being pursued.

Justification

The encouragement of housing development in appropriate locations in the countryside is an important plan objective. This will assist in the retention of population and services in this predominantly rural area. New development in the countryside must reflect the character of the surrounding area to minimise impact.

Potential impact on the wider countryside will also be reduced by the re-use of sites where development has previously taken place. The retention of local vernacular buildings and buildings with architectural merit will assist in maintaining the character and appearance of the area. All new dwellings will have to comply the design requirements of policy H7, in order to avoid suburban layouts and architecture which are alien to the rural environment and to minimise any impact on the surrounding countryside.

Buildings that are robust and long-established, such as stone built steadings, stores and cattle sheds, may form part of a reuse or rehabilitation scheme. The replacement of structures such as wooden or corrugated-iron sheds or stores, stables and cattlesheds will not be permitted.

Supplementary Guidance (SG) has been produced in order to provide further advice on the interpretation of this policy, and will be used in the process of determining planning applications.

Other considerations such as noise contours, developer contributions and energy efficiency will be taken into account in the determination of a planning application, and advice on these matters can be viewed in the aforementioned SG.

Policy H7

New Housing in the Open Countryside

This policy assumes in favour of an application for a new house in the open countryside provided all of the following requirements are met:

Siting

- It reflects the traditional pattern of settlement in the locality and is sensitively integrated with the surrounding landform using natural backdrops, particularly where the site is clearly visible in the landscape. Obtrusive development (i.e. on a skyline, artificially elevated ground or in open settings such as the the central area of a field) will not be acceptable;
- It does not detract from the character or setting of existing buildings or their surrounding area when added to an existing grouping or create inappropriate ribbon development;
- It does not contribute to a build-up of development where the number of houses has the effect of changing the rural character of the area. Particular attention will be given to proposals in the open countryside where there has been a significant growth in the number of new house applications; and,
- At least 50% of the site boundaries are long established and are capable of distinguishing the site from surrounding land (e.g. dykes, hedgerows, watercourses, woodlands, tracks and roadways).

Justification

The encouragement of housing development in appropriate locations in the countryside is an important plan objective. This will assist in the retention of population and services in this predominantly rural area.

The Plan aims to allow housing in the open countryside that can be easily absorbed into the landscape. New development should be low impact and reflect the character of the surrounding area in terms of the traditional pattern of settlement and the scale and design of housing. The introduction of suburban layouts and house styles and the incremental build up of new houses have the potential to alter the rural character and detrimentally impact on the area's high quality rural environment.

Proposals that add to an existing grouping, such as an established re-use or rehabilitation scheme, will be more satisfactorily integrated where they connect through built form, layout and landscape features. Development that adds to an existing suburban layout should be avoided. Infill development along a road or landscape feature may be appropriate where this does not detract from the character or setting of existing houses.

Innovative modern design and energy efficiency measures are encouraged to promote sustainable development.

If the above criteria for the setting of the new house are met, the following design requirements then apply:

Design

- A roof pitch between 40-55 degrees;
- A gable width of no more than 2.5 times the height of the wall from ground to eaves level (see diagram 1);
- Uniform external finishes and materials including slate or dark 'slate effect' roof tiles;
- A vertical emphasis and uniformity to all windows and doors;
- Boundary demarcation that reflects the established character or style (e.g. dry stone dykes, beech hedges) in the locality;
- Proposals must be accompanied by a landscaping plan showing an appropriate proportion of the plot, generally 25%, to be planted with native tree species at least 1.5 metres in height.

Exceptions to the above design requirements will only be justified on the basis of innovative designs that respond to the setting of the house.

Proposals which involve the loss of woodland will be assessed against policy ER3 and must take account of the Council's Supplementary Guidance on Trees and Development.

Supplementary Guidance has been produced in order to provide further advice on the interpretation of this policy, and will be used in the process of determining planning applications.

Proposals for holiday homes in the open countryside will be assessed against this policy.

Other considerations such as noise contours, developer contributions and energy efficiency will be taken into account in the determination of a planning application, and advice on these matters can be viewed in the aforementioned Supplementary Guidance.



the moray council

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