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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 Planning Guidance (SPG), Housing in the Countryside, provides advice on policies H7 (Reuse & Replacement of Existing Buildings in the Countryside) and H8 (New Housing in the Open Countryside) of the adopted Moray Local Plan 2008 (MLP 2008). The document provides guidance on the interpretation of these policies and other important aspects such as design.

The draft SPG is subject to a 6-week period of public consultation. Following consideration of the responses received the final SPG will be presented to the Planning and Regulatory Committee for approval.

Once approved, the SPG will be a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications for housing in the countryside.



2 Background

(i) National Planning Context

Scottish Planning Policy 15 (SPP15), Rural Development, 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.



Designing Places, a Scottish Government policy statement, sets out the expectations on the planning system to deliver 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.



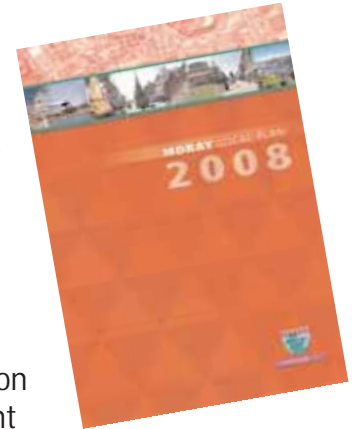
(ii) Local Planning Context

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 Moray Development Plan (Moray Structure Plan 2007 and Moray Local Plan 2008), 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 Moray Local Plan 2008 sets out two primary policies to accommodate housing in the countryside; Policy H7 (Re-use and Replacement of Existing Buildings in the Countryside) and Policy H8 (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. Each proposal will be assessed on its own merits. Precedence will not be accepted as a relevant material consideration in the determination of an application. This is to primarily prevent the mistakes of the past, in terms of poor siting and design, being repeated.



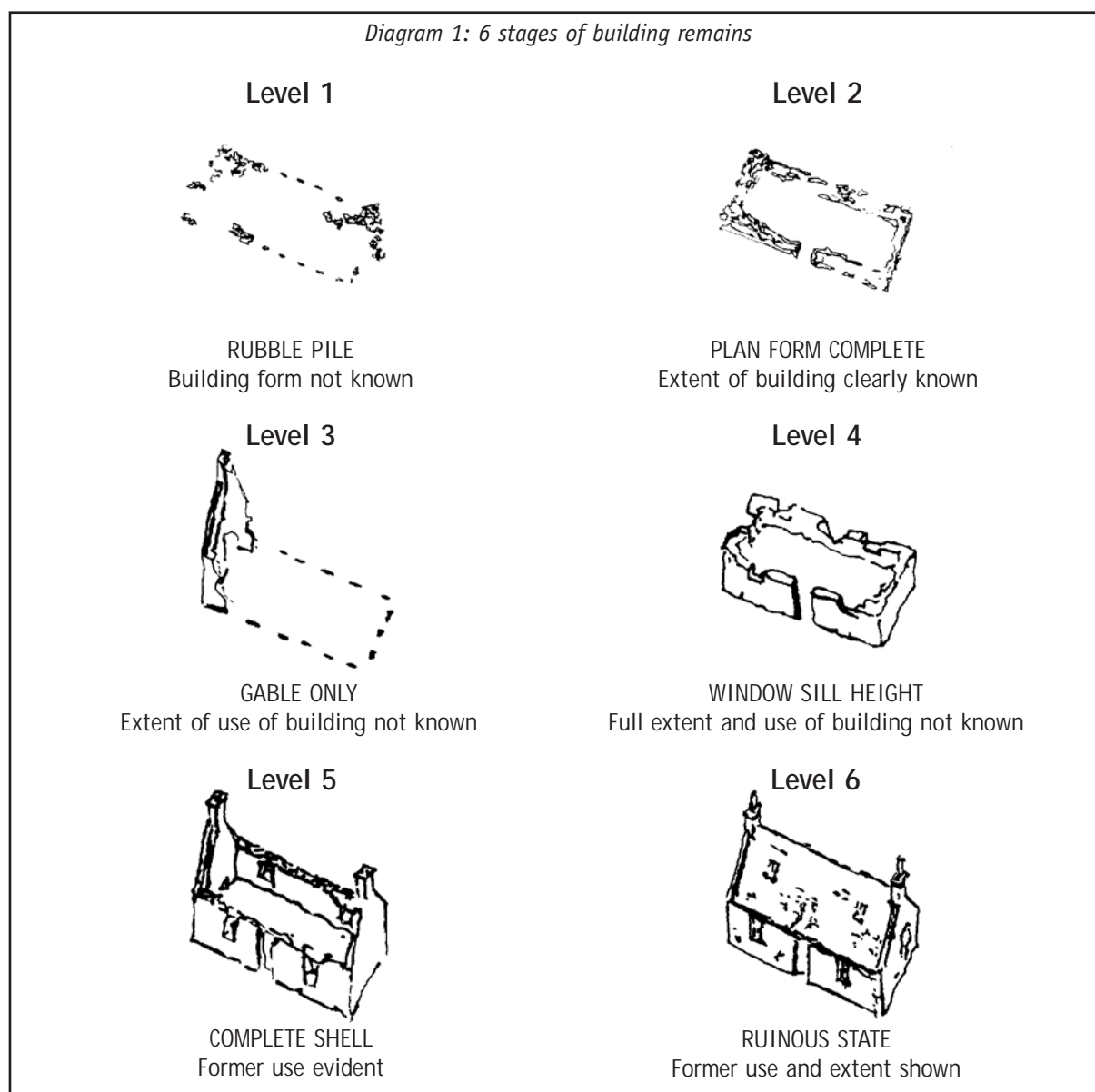
3 POLICY H7: REUSE & REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING BUILDINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Proposals for the replacement or re-use of existing buildings in the countryside and any accompanying new build will primarily be managed through policy H7. The following sub-sections provide guidance on the interpretation of key phrases contained within the policy.

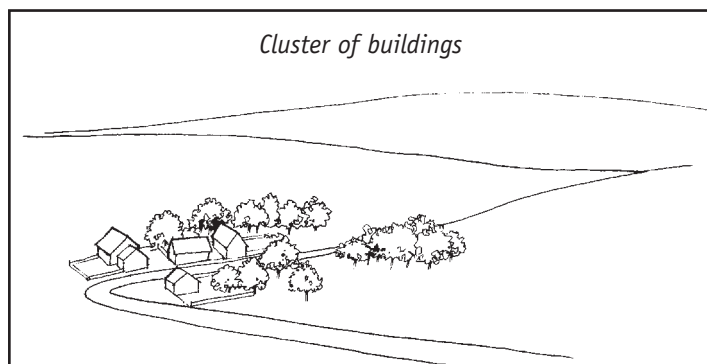
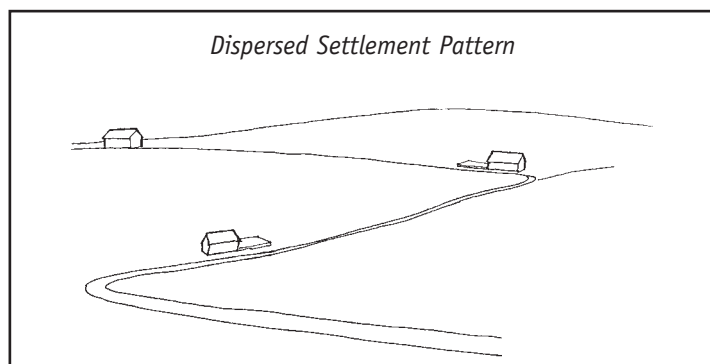
(i) Replacement

A complete new build replacement of a previous building in the countryside (equivalent to level 2 in diagram 1) will be acceptable where it is a one-for-one replacement. The new dwelling will be required to sit on at least part of the footprint of the previous building and comply with the design criteria of policy H8, IMP1 (Developer Requirements) and the design considerations set out in this guidance. Exceptions to siting may apply where site characteristics are unfavourable. For example, a replacement dwelling may be situated away from the footprint of the previous building where there is evidence that the original site floods. Other exceptions that may be acceptable include:

- ground contamination; and,
- overtly prominent sites.



Where replacement is proposed for a number of buildings grouped together, for example a farm steading, the policy criteria apply in respect of footprint and level 2, but, in addition, the proposed group of new houses will be assessed against the dominant settlement pattern found in the locality. A cluster of new houses to replace a cluster of buildings may not be appropriate.



Temporary Structures

Existing buildings of a temporary nature or origin will not necessarily qualify for replacement dwellings under policy H7. These buildings/structures include:

- moveable units, plant enclosures, huts, etc associated with operations on land;
- buildings without fully enclosing walls (e.g. bail stores);
- structures built for countryside uses, such as agriculture and forestry, which are not considered to be of a permanent construction, i.e. stone or brick built;
- field shelters, sheds, outhouses intended to have a limited lifespan; and,
- corrugated-iron sheds and stores.

Structures that are built for countryside uses, such as agriculture and forestry, are constructed for functional purposes. As a result, they are likely to be located in positions that are not suitable for housing. Therefore, the replacement of these types of structures with residential is unlikely to be acceptable unless they are long established and site characteristics are favourable.

Long-established versions of these buildings/structures such as those that are stone or brick-built (e.g. stone byres) may, by reason of their long-term setting and their permanency of construction, be judged acceptable for reuse or replacement by a new dwelling. Where the proposal involves the reuse of a substantially intact building, policy H7 criteria will apply.



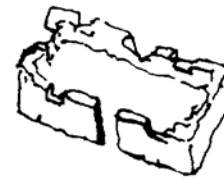
Temporary structures such as bale stores will not qualify for replacement dwellings

(ii) Reuse

A scheme that proposes a limited number of new build units within the curtilage of, or adjacent to, an existing building must include the renovation/conversion of a substantially intact stone and slate building. Proposals that do not propose such renovation or reuse will not qualify for consideration under the terms of policy H7, and (under the terms of policy H8) are unlikely to be supported.

Substantially intact buildings are equivalent to level 4 as depicted in diagram 1. Their complete replacement with a single new dwelling 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. If completely removed, then any accompanying new build will not comply with the terms of policy H7.

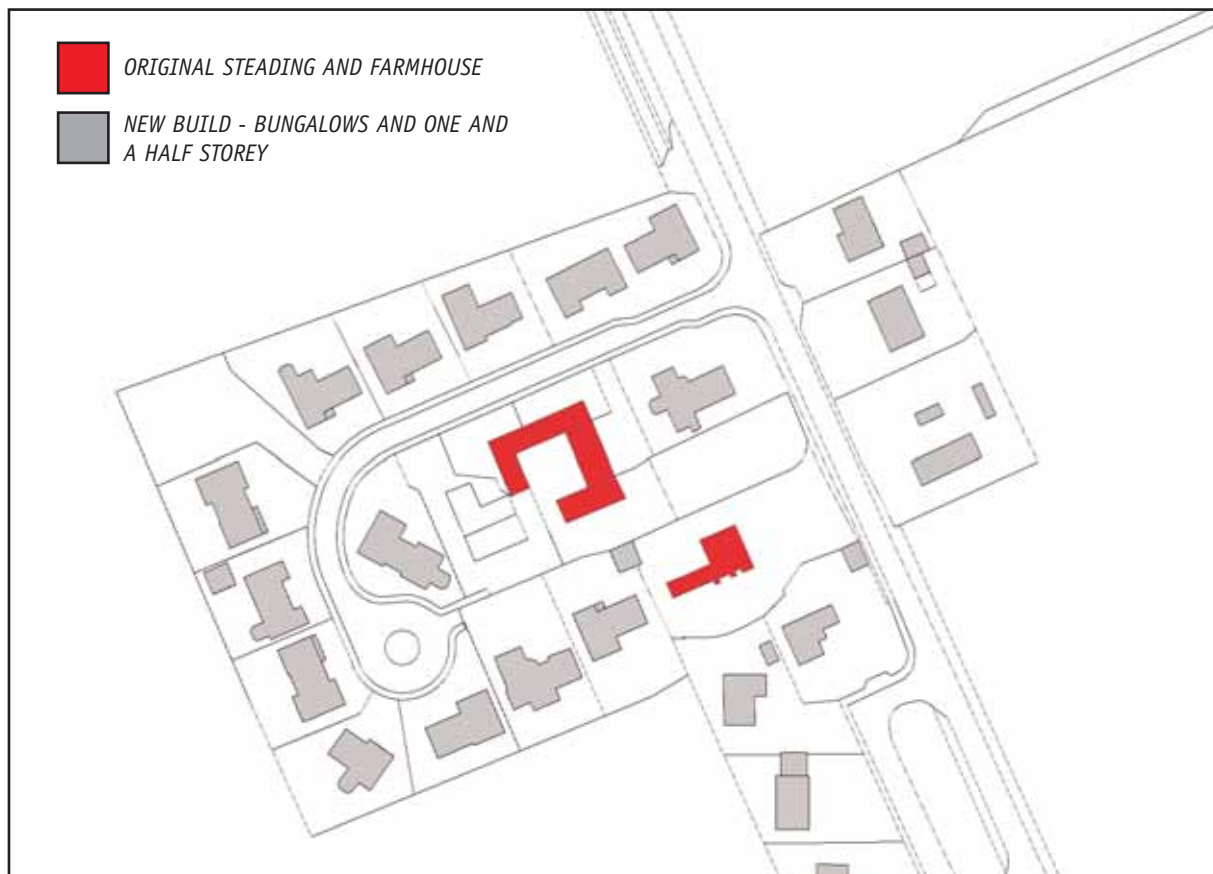
Level 4



WINDOW SILL HEIGHT
Full extent and use of building not known

Where new build is proposed along with the renovation/conversion of a substantially intact stone and slate building, the renovation/conversion must be finished and suitable for occupation before completion of 50% of the accompanying new build unit(s).

The number of new build dwellings that accompany a renovation or conversion development must not dominate the overall development

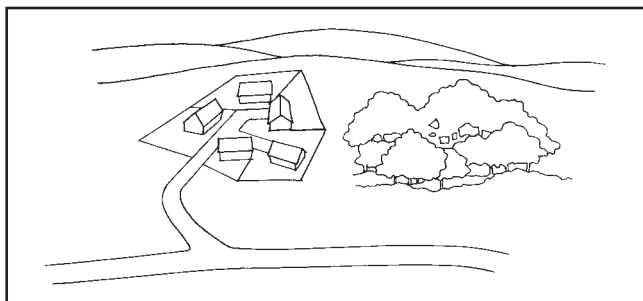


Appropriate conditions will be attached to the planning consent to ensure such phasing. This is to comply with the sustainability objectives of the development plan whereby traditional buildings that maintain the character and distinctiveness of the rural landscape are revived and retained, and to ensure that developers will not abandon the renovation part of their permission on completion of the new build.

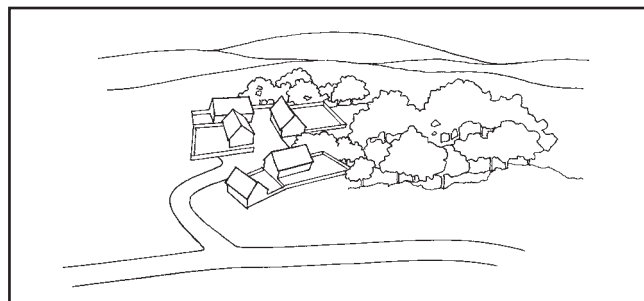
The number of new build units that accompany a renovation/conversion must be proportional to the original extent of the building on site and be in scale and character with that which existed previously. This means that the layout, number and size of new build units must reflect both the traditional building(s) (rather than the buildings they are replacing) and the traditional patterns of development in the locality. The footprint of the new build houses should not necessarily equate to the buildings being replaced, as these may have been a substantial size given their functional justification for being there. The scale, massing, form and design of new buildings must complement, rather than dominate, the traditional architecture and building disposition, both on site and in the locality. Further advice on the location, siting and design of buildings in the countryside is provided in Section 3 (iii) and 4.

In terms of policy H7 and policy H8, new buildings must be carefully positioned within the landscape through sympathetic siting in sensitive locations, using new planting to provide shelter and help them integrate with their setting. Low-key, informal groups 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.

An additional single new dwelling located on undeveloped land adjacent to a rehabilitation scheme may comply with the terms of policy H8 provided it does not detract from the character or setting of the building group or surrounding area or result in a linear extension. However, any cumulative effect of successive buildings will be of significance in the determination of applications for further new houses to prevent build-up, as this could undermine the development plan strategy of directing this level of development to existing rural communities.



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 intergrated with their setting have much less impact on their landscape.

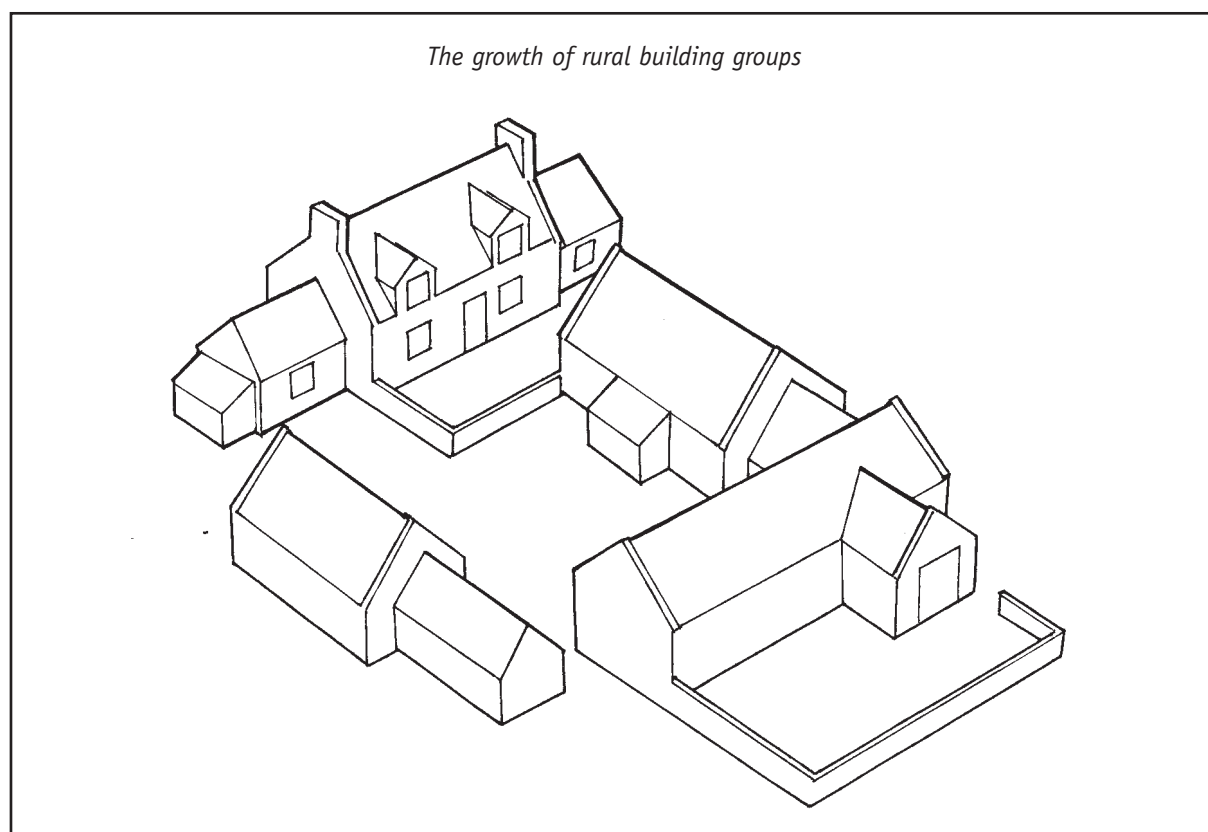
(iii) Design Considerations

Re-use

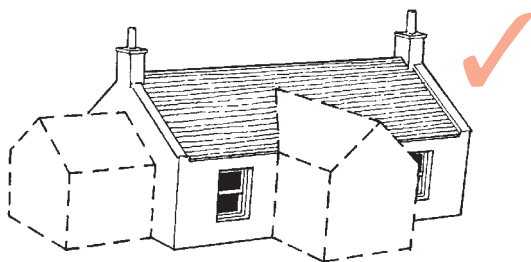
The re-use or rehabilitation of existing buildings in the countryside will usually take the form of renovation or conversion. Renovation is the extension or modernisation of existing houses. Conversion is the adaptation of domestic buildings for residential use.

Renovation

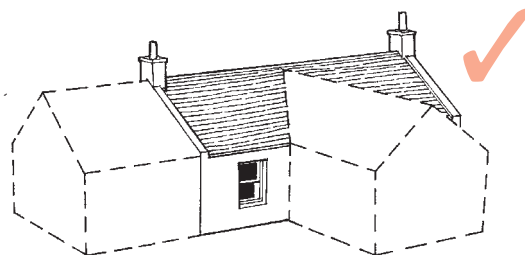
Rural buildings are generally of a linear form with pitched roofs. This is because their plan was traditionally dictated by the span of the roof, which was determined by the length of available roof timbers. This meant that buildings would be the depth of a single-room and the building grew through the addition of rooms, normally to the rear or side of the original building. Rear extensions would often link to outbuildings. Buildings also grew upwards, often making use of roof space. One and a half storey houses with pitched dormers are a traditional feature of houses in Moray.



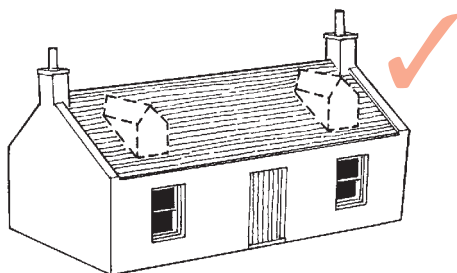
Extensions and alterations to buildings should respect the traditional form of the original building. Extensions should generally be located to the rear or side of the original building. Extensions should be subordinate to the original building to ensure the character and appearance of the original building 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.

Extensions and Alterations to Buildings

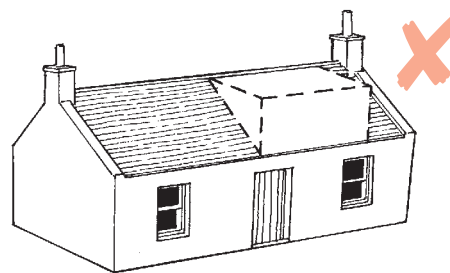
An effective means of making a side extension subservient to the original is to set it back from the existing building line. This minimizes the problem of obtaining a good match of old and new materials and eliminates unsightly bonding.



Pitched roofs are always preferable to flat roofs when traditional cottages and farm houses are being extended. Roof pitch and gable width should generally match the existing house or be subservient.



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.

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.

Steading Conversion, Alves



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. 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.

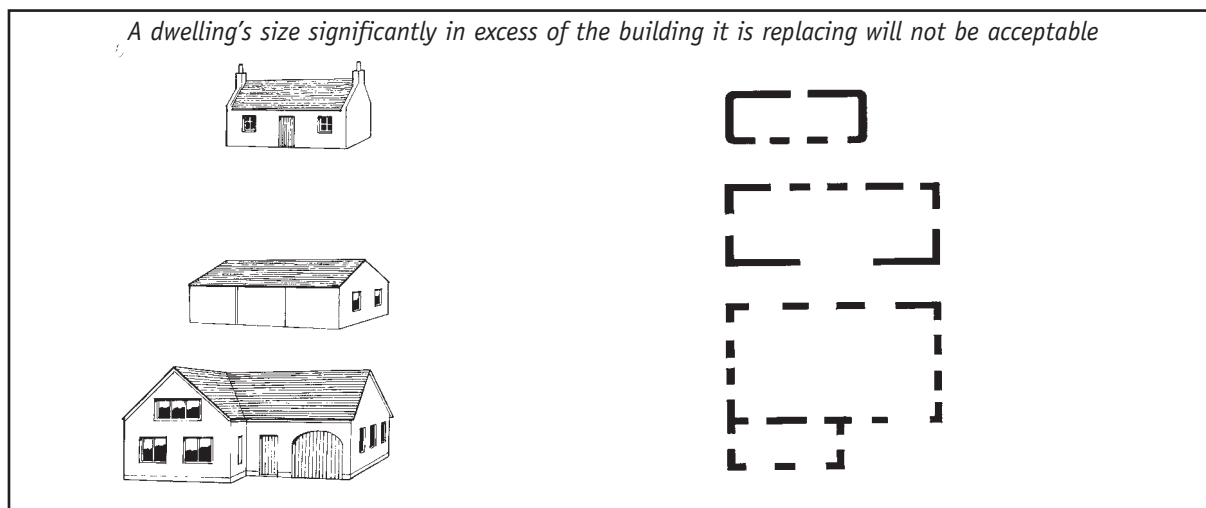
The conversion of educational buildings such as schools to domestic properties should require minimal alteration. The retention of the integrity of the original architectural design is the prime objective. Many rural schools are of a domestic scale and their conversion should not pose major structural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

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.

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, unless the circumstances outlined above apply.

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

Where additional new dwellings are permitted under the terms of policy H7 as part of a rehabilitation scheme, the design requirements of policy H8 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 H7 or as a standalone house under policy H8.

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 settlement pattern 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.

4 POLICY H8: NEW HOUSING IN THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

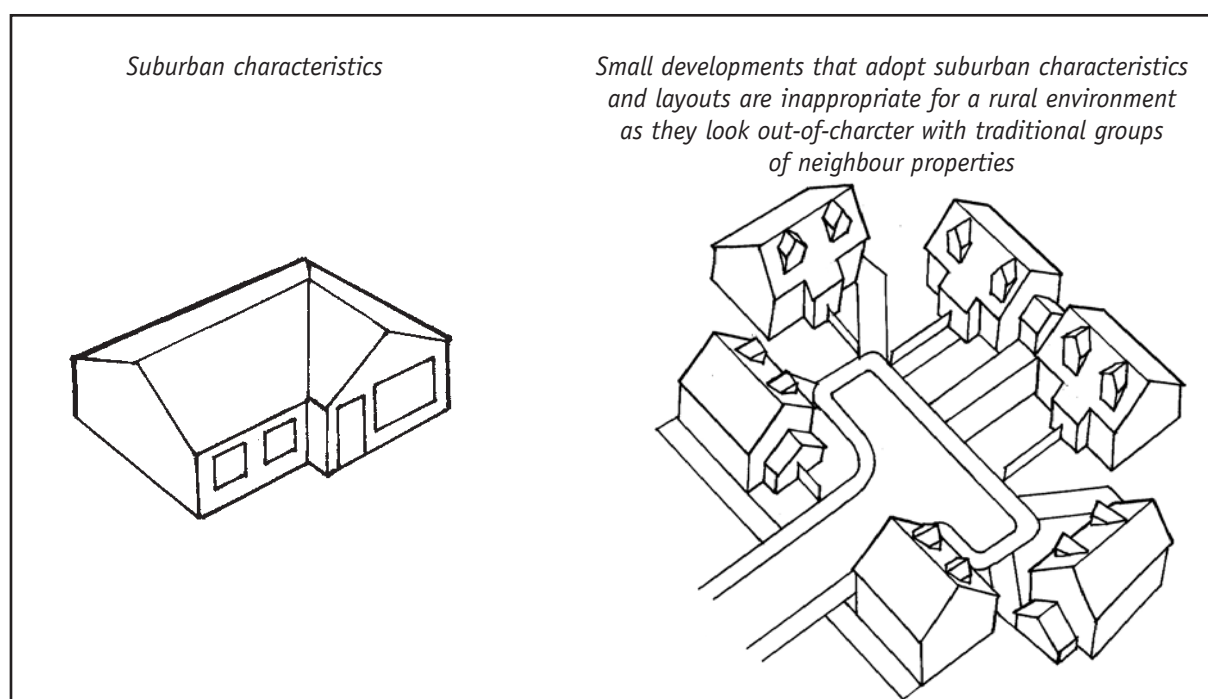
Proposals for new houses in the countryside that do not include the replacement or reuse of an existing building will be primarily considered against policy H8 of the Moray Local Plan 2008. The following sub-sections provide guidance on the key aspects of the policy.

(i) Multiple House Applications

A multiple house application will mean a sole application for 3 houses or more. A sole application for 3 houses or more will be advertised as a departure from policy H8 of the Moray Local Plan 2008. An application for one house situated within or adjacent to an existing group of recently constructed dwellings may be considered favourably subject to compliance with the provisions of policy H8, this guidance and any other material considerations the planning authority considers relevant.

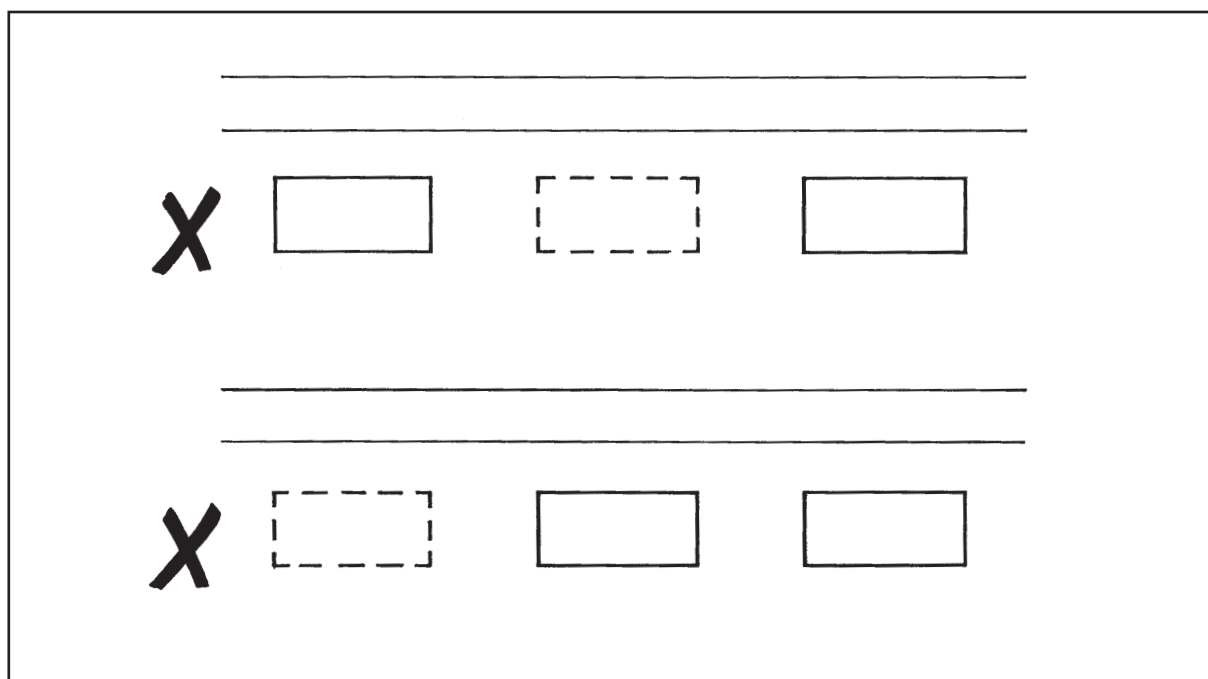
(ii) Impact on the Character or Setting of Existing Buildings or their Surrounding Area

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 grouping. This means that the siting of the new building must form a logical part of the existing grouping and must not be disjointed or have the appearance of being added on. The design must reflect the rural character of the countryside and shall not have suburban characteristics. Suburban characteristics on existing buildings within the grouping or in the vicinity will not be an acceptable justification to add more. Where an additional house is being applied for (or houses, should successive applications be submitted), the impact on the surrounding area will be taken into consideration. Where a cumulative build-up of additional houses to existing groupings or in the local area is judged to have reached a stage where a further new house will detract from the rural character, it will lead to a refusal.

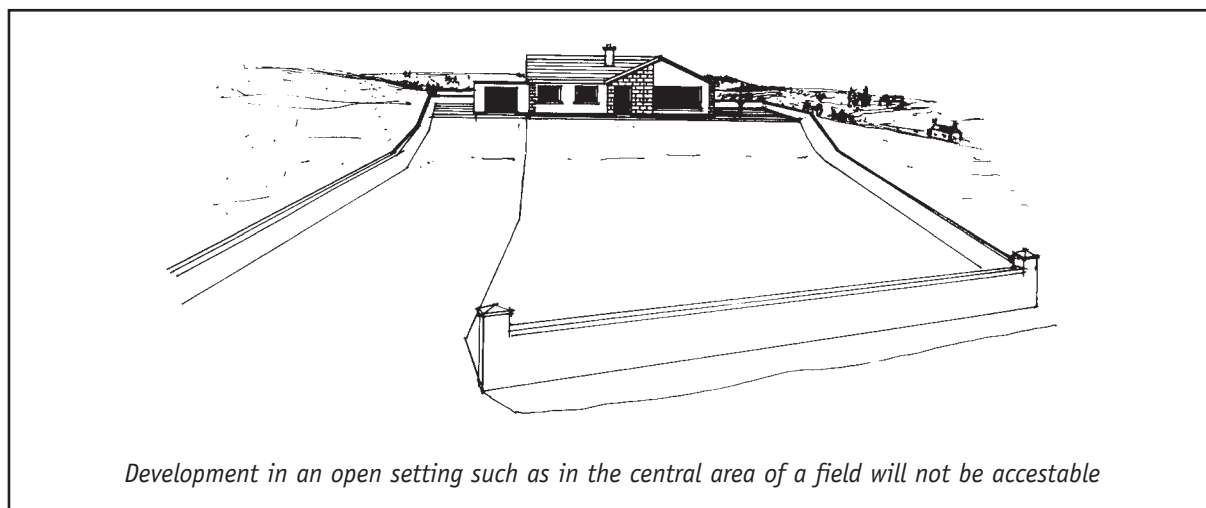
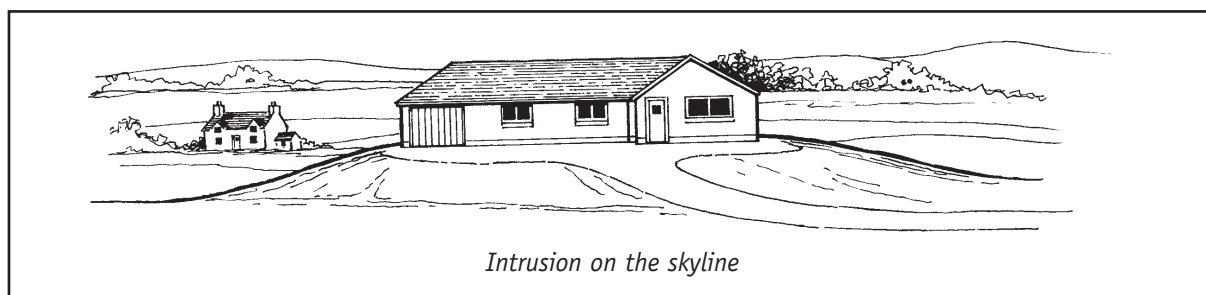
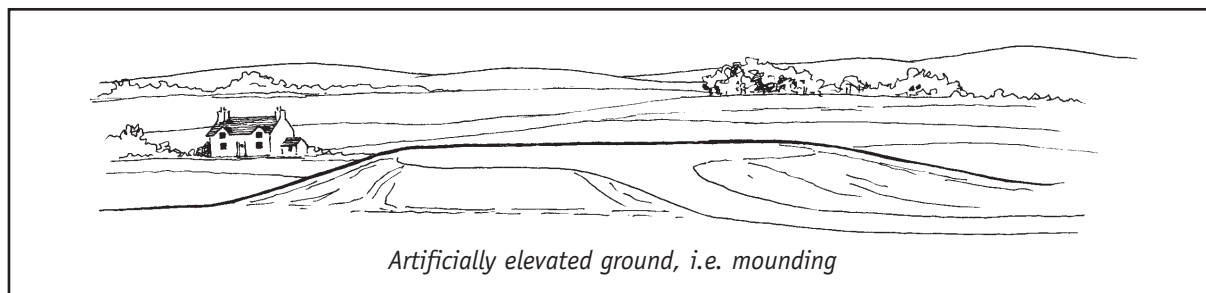


(iii) Linear Extension

Development that will result in a linear extension will not be acceptable. This will include development that adds an additional house to an existing line of two or more houses, such as along a roadside or where the proposal is for an infill site that will join two separate areas of housing creating one entity. These types of proposals will be considered to detract from the rural character of the countryside.

**(iv) Prominence**

A structure that is, or would be, overtly prominent in the landscape means that it is situated in a position where it is obtrusive, i.e. it would have a negative impact on the landscape. Examples include on a skyline, artificially elevated ground and in an open setting such as a central area of a field. Structures that are overtly prominent are generally incongruous within their landscape setting and differ from those that are (or would be) simply easily seen, but designed in such a way as to be in harmony with the landscape in which they sit. For example, a building that works with site contours and uses the landscape and planting (such as 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. In a few instances, buildings that are architecturally designed specifically to reflect their impact on the landscape; or, those that are sensitive, low-key and well-integrated in a form similar to traditional building form can be acceptable in prominent locations, but those will be rare. As a general rule, development that is suburban in character will not be acceptable.



Prominence in the landscape can vary according to a building's situation and distance from which it is viewed. Some sites may be more prominent than others because they are located adjacent to, or can be seen from, main routes and paths; or the topography, such as a flat plateau, highlights their location in the landscape. Prominence can also vary according to different viewing distances. For example, a building viewed at a distance of around 25 metres may be considered overtly prominent but when observed at a greater distance of around 1.5km may appear less prominent in the landscape as the context of the surrounding area comes into view. Careful siting and planting can help to minimise the impact of the building on the landscape at all distances. To determine the degree of prominence in the landscape, a building's situation and its impact on the landscape at a range of visual distances should be taken into account together with whether the required 25% planting can be subtly used to minimise overt elements of visual impact. Where it is considered that new planting would not alleviate an adverse impact on the landscape or where there is an insufficient existing backdrop, the proposal will be judged to fail policy H8.

(v) Site Boundaries

Policy H8 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. Fencing, such as 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.

*Post and wire**Stone boundary wall**Recently formed track**Long-established track***(vi) Trees**

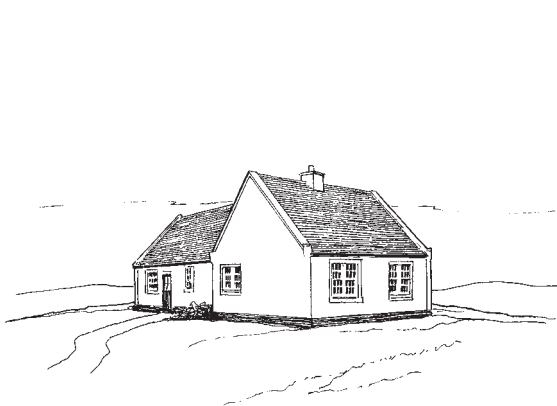
Policy H8 has introduced a requirement of 25% of the plot area to be planted with native species trees to help integrate new buildings with their landscape settings. In general, a building set against a backdrop of trees is one of the most successful ways of blending new development with the landscape. 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.



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 should be carried out in accordance with the advice in the Council's supplementary planning 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 H8 and cannot be used as a mitigating factor to justify otherwise intrusive 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.



Planting and trees help to integrate a new house into it's landscape setting

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.

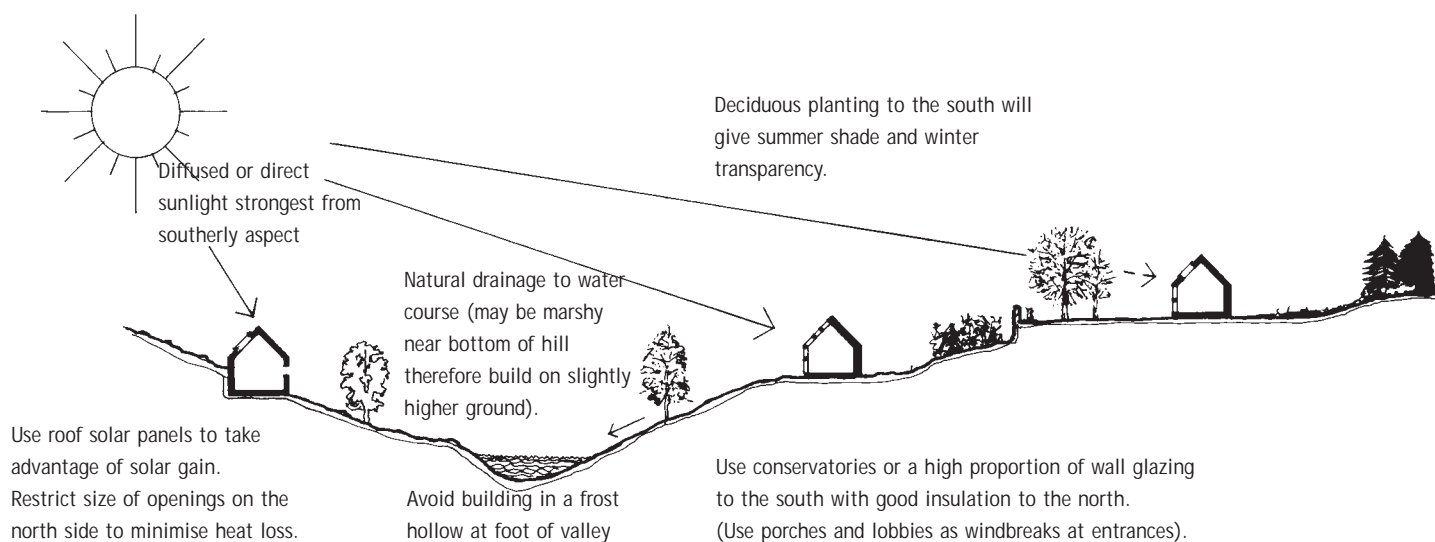
(vii) Design Considerations

Policy H8 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 H7) or are a standalone house (policy H8). 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.
- 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

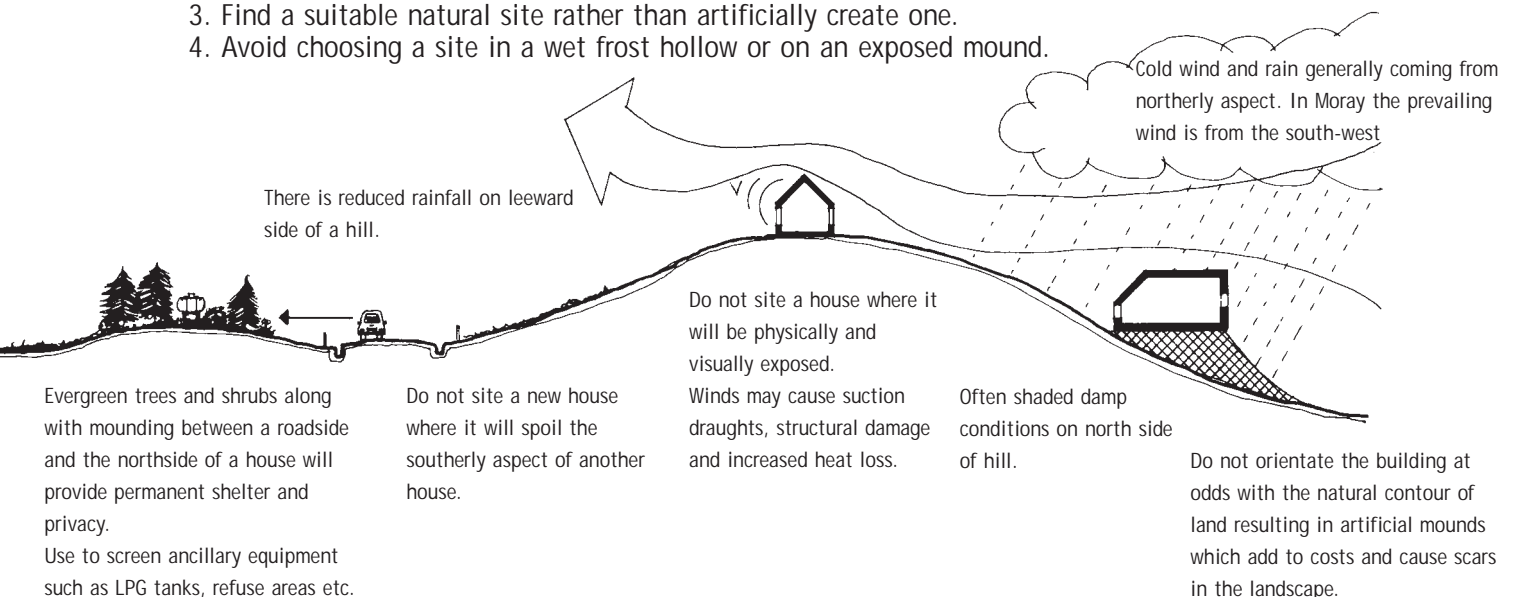
Placing a new house within its site boundaries is as important as selecting an appropriate location in the landscape. The landscape of Moray must remain the dominant visual feature and any new development must appear appropriate to its setting. The following factors must be taken into account when considering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

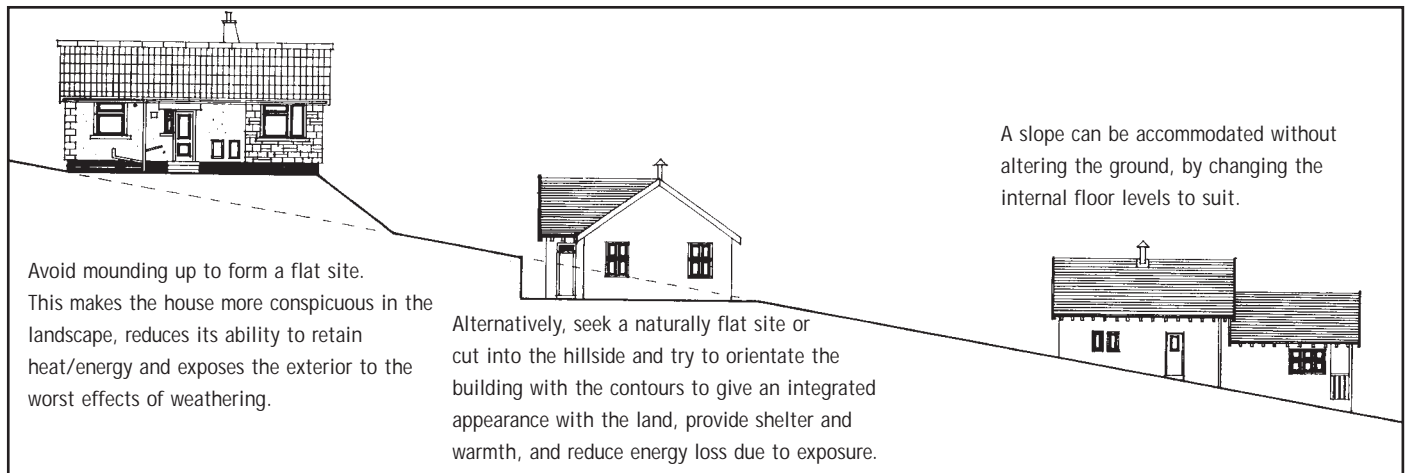
Diagram 2: Energy Efficiency

General principles:-

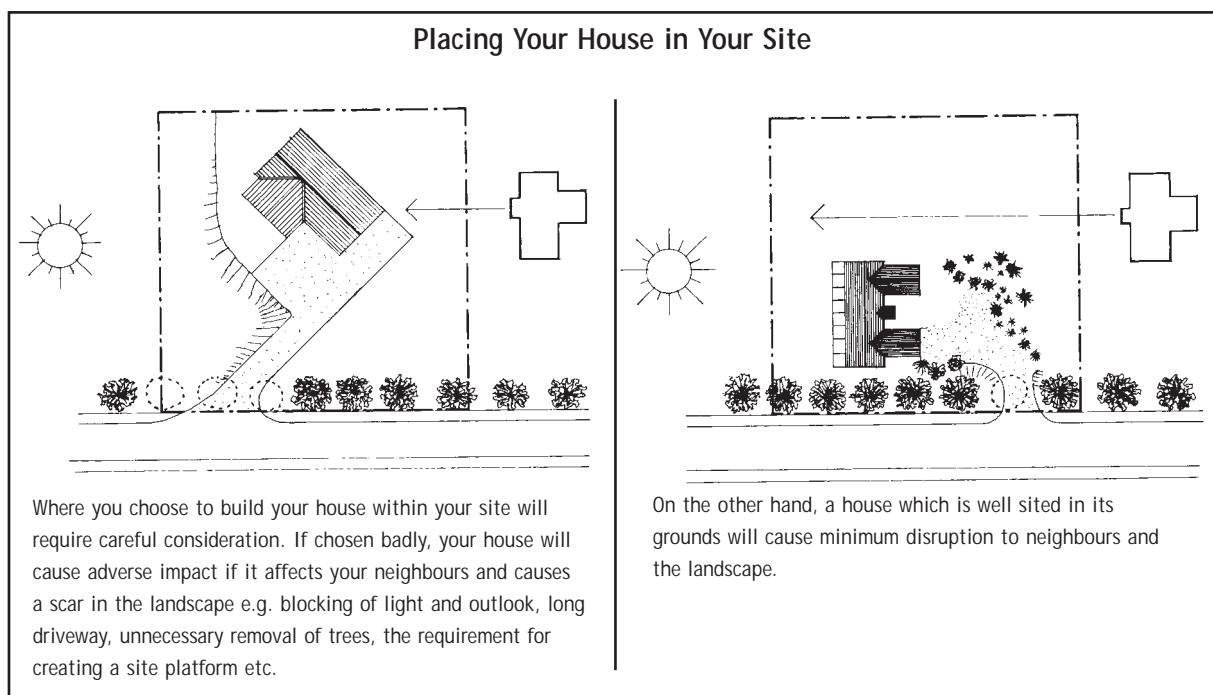
1. Maximise southerly solar gain, minimise northerly heat loss.
2. Maximise the use of trees for shelter, privacy, air cleaning etc.
3. Find a suitable natural site rather than artificially create one.
4. Avoid choosing a site in a wet frost hollow or on an exposed mound.



Working with the contours of your site



- 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 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.
- 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.

Contemporary designs based on the vernacular



© Courtesy of Dualchas Building Design

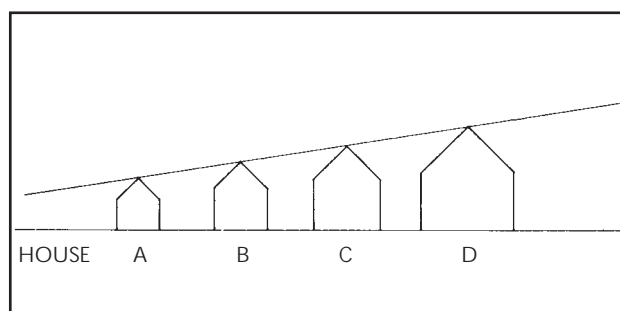
The introduction, evolution and widespread use of kit houses has moved design further away from rural characteristics. Kit houses are largely aimed at the suburban UK market, and pay no particular regard to Scottish characteristics although they may be marketed with a Scottish name. However, kit houses 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

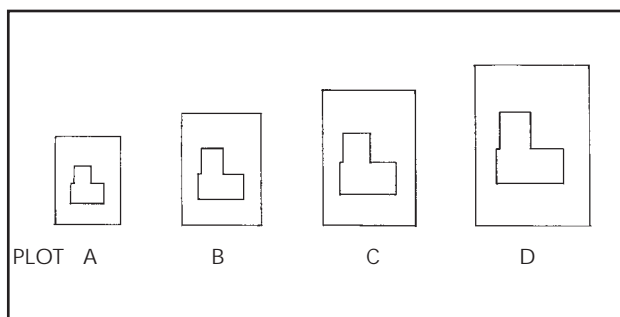
Scale is a key consideration in the design of a new house in the countryside; a building's size must suit the landscape in which it sits, its surroundings and the house type.

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. 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 with a horizontal emphasis 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 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.

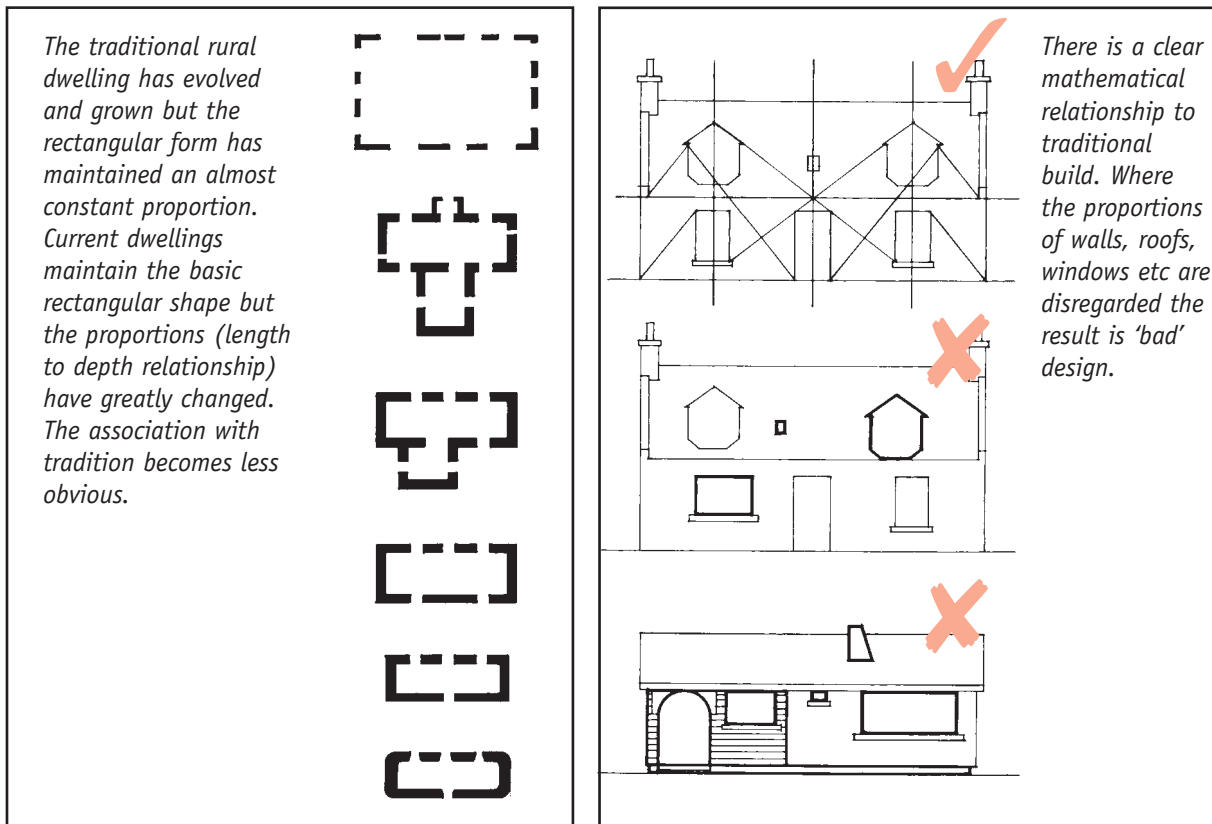
Innovative designs will be acceptable provided they relate to the landscape in which they sit, i.e. they do not overwhelm the rural setting and are truly inspirational.

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.



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. 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

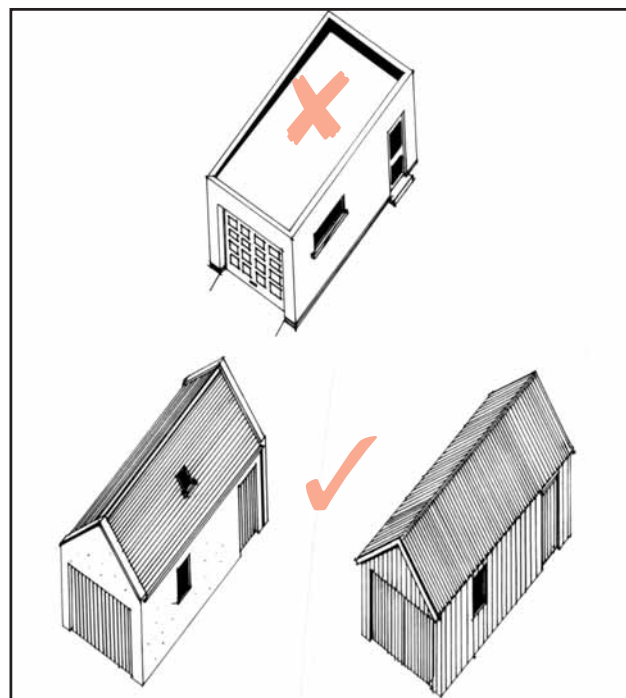
Ancillary features of a new house are an important design consideration; they must be considered from the outset as an integral part of the development rather than be an afterthought. Examples of ancillary features include subsidiary buildings (garages, etc), road entrance, ground surfaces and site boundaries.

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. 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.



Inappropriate materials and detailing for the rural environment



Windows and Doors

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | <p><i>Modern windows should maintain simple design standards and good proportions.</i></p> | | |
| | <p><i>Designs should reflect the shape of the opening. Arches should only be employed if the opening itself is curved.</i></p> | | |
| | <p><i>Avoid asymmetrical designs in both the horizontal and vertical planes.</i></p> | | |

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.

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| | | | |
| <p><i>In all instances windows and doors should be simple designs preferably constructed in timber.</i></p> | | <p><i>Avoid asymmetrical designs.</i></p> | |
| | | | |
| <p><i>Avoid the use of elaborate designs either on the door or the glass itself.</i></p> | | <p><i>Doors should fully reflect the shape of the opening.</i></p> | |

External Fittings and Lighting

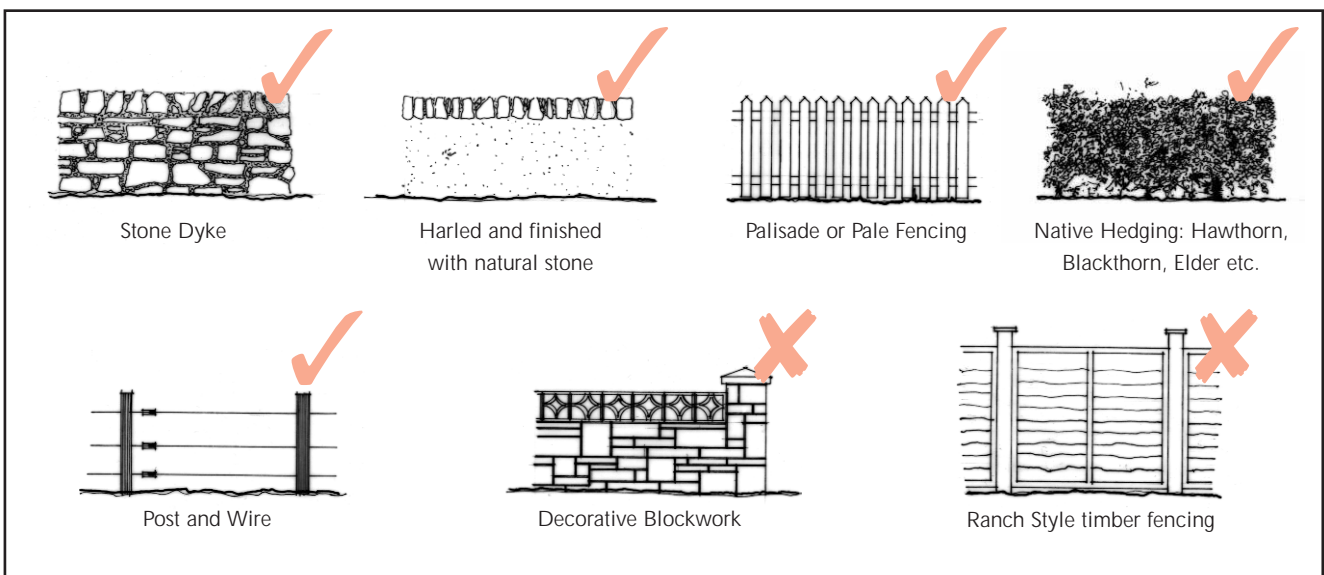
Outside lighting is often an essential requirement of rural housing for reason of accessibility and security, but it can also be responsible for light pollution, energy wastage and blindness for road users if not used wisely. External lighting should, therefore, be directed downwards and make effective 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. Ranch 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.



APPENDIX 1: EXTRACT OF POLICY H7 & POLICY H8 OF THE MORAY LOCAL PLAN 2008

POLICY H7: RE-USE & REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING BUILDINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The re-use or 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). Exceptions will be made when development on the footprint is demonstrated as being unviable due to site characteristics such as flooding.

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, in proportion to the original extent of building on site;
- ii) be contained within the curtilage of the existing building site and must not extend into previously undeveloped land; and
- iii) be in scale and in character with that which existed previously (e.g. a courtyard layout), and, where a rehabilitation is part of the scheme, be reflective of the original design characteristics.

In all cases, developments should incorporate stonework and salvaged material, wherever practicable.

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 submission of evidence as to why conversion or renovation is not being pursued.

(N.B. Where buildings are substantially intact, there may be a requirement to identify the presence of bats and assess any potential impact on their roosts).

This policy does not apply to the replacement of temporary structures such as wooden or corrugated-iron sheds or stores (unless as part of a rehabilitation scheme).

This policy will be supplemented by Guidance, which will be the subject of separate further consultation, prior to incorporation of the Guidance into the process of determining planning applications.

Proposals falling within the aircraft noise contours, as published by the Ministry of Defence, will be subject to consultations with MoD and consideration against policy EP7 regarding noise pollution.

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 should reflect the character of the surrounding area thus minimising its 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. Replacement dwellings will still have to comply with the design requirements of policy H8, in order to avoid suburban layouts and to minimise any impact on the surrounding countryside.

Adequate servicing provision should be available to avoid any potential adverse impact on surrounding properties.

POLICY H8: NEW HOUSING IN THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

This policy assumes against multiple house applications (more than 2) on the basis that these are more appropriately directed to Rural Communities (H6) and applied to the Re-use and Replacement of Existing Buildings (H7).

New dwellings in the open countryside will be acceptable subject to meeting the requirements below:

a) Siting

- It does not detract from the character or setting of existing buildings, or their surrounding area, when added to an existing grouping, or linear extension
- It is not overtly prominent (such as on a skyline or on artificially elevated ground; or in open settings such as central areas of fields). Where an otherwise prominent site is offset by natural backdrops, these will normally be acceptable in terms of this criterion.
- At least 50% of the site boundaries are long established and are capable of distinguishing the site from surrounding land (for example dykes, hedgerows, watercourses, woodlands, tracks and roadways).

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

b) Design

- A roof pitch of 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;
- Proposals must be accompanied by a plan showing 25% of the plot area to be planted with native species trees, at least 1.5m in height;
- Where there is an established character, or style, of boundary demarcation in the locality (e.g. beech hedges, dry stone dykes) new boundaries must be sympathetic.

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

This policy will be supplemented by Guidance, which will be the subject of separate further consultation, prior to incorporation of the Guidance into the process of determining planning applications.

The Guidance will include advice on maximising energy efficiency.

Proposals falling within the aircraft noise contours, as published by the Ministry of Defence, will be subject to consultations with MoD and consideration against policy EP7 regarding noise pollution.

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 scale and design. In particular, the introduction of suburban style or ribbon development into the countryside would have an adverse effect on the area's high quality of environment.

Adequate servicing provision should be available to avoid any potential adverse impact on surrounding properties.

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

Useful Contacts

For development enquiries, applications and enforcement:

Development Management
The Moray Council
Environmental Service
High Street
Elgin, IV30 1BX
Tel: 01343 563501

For information about local arboriculturists/tree specialists:

The Yellow Pages – www.yell.com
Search under 'Tree Work'

International Society of Arboriculture
148 Hydes Road
Wednesbury
West Midlands
WS10 0DR
Tel/Fax: 0121 556 8302
www.isa-uki.org/pages/scotland.htm

Institute of Chartered Foresters
7A St Colme Street, Edinburgh, EH3 6AA
Tel: 0131 225 2705
Fax: 0131 220 6128
Email: icf@charteredforesters.org
www.charteredforesters.org/intro.html

For enquiries about felling license requirements:

Forestry Commission
Grampian Conservancy
Ordiquhill, Portsoy Road
Huntly, AB54 4SJ
Tel: 01466 794542
Fax: 01466 794986
Email: grampian.cons@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

For property enquiries:

The Moray Council
Legal Services
High Street
Elgin, IV30 1BX
Tel: 01343 563011

For enquiries about protected trees:

Planning & Development
The Moray Council
Environmental Services
High Street
Elgin, IV30 1BX
Tel: 01343 563300