

THE CARADON *DESIGN* GUIDE

SECTION E

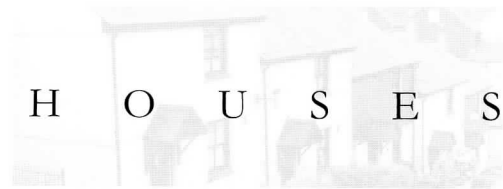
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

H O U S E S



Supplementary Planning Guidance

July 2000



C O N T E N T S



INTRODUCTION	E1
A TYPICAL CORNISH HOUSE	E2
DESIGN PRINCIPLES	E2
TYPICAL PLAN FORMS	E5
HOUSE PLANS AND THE CREATION OF STREETS	E6





Modern housing which successfully integrates elements of the Cornish vernacular, but uses contemporary detailing. Note the use of real stone, slate and a traditional hedgebank in the foreground.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Caradon District Council has produced the Design Guide to help conserve and strengthen the special character of the built environment in Caradon, especially its traditional towns and villages. This section is concerned with good housing design. The factsheets provide guidance on appropriate details and materials. Other sections of the Design Guide will provide valuable background information. Please read the following sections to help you.

- *Section A* Explores the concept of local distinctiveness.
- *Section B* Provides information on Design within the Planning System.
- *Section C* Looks at fitting development into the landscape.
- *Section D* Focuses on the local context.

H O U S E S

A TYPICAL CORNISH HOUSE?

What are the elements that make a house or cottage recognisably Cornish? The answer is a subtle blend of materials, scale, proportions and traditional details - producing a timeless architecture of unsophisticated simplicity and charm.

Much modern housing shows a lack of appreciation of the distinctiveness of the traditional Cornwall building style, or attempts to mimic it using inappropriate plan layouts, styles, decorative motifs and materials. As stated in the Introduction, the 'problem' is not usually a lack of trying. Houses are often designed in a far too fussy and over complicated manner, using 'imitation' materials, under the misconception that this will create an 'Olde Worlde' effect. The outcome is that new housing is frequently overly busy, especially when adjacent properties vie for attention, rather than unobtrusively settling into the landscape or streetscene (see section D).

The traditional buildings of Cornwall tend to be very simple, and built of a limited range of locally obtainable natural materials. A large part of the difficulty is undiscerning choice of standard 'off the peg' materials and elements, and to some extent loss of traditional skills. Builders yards are full of products that are available from John O'Groats to Lands End and, although modern materials are not bad 'per se', they seldom mellow and improve with age, or have the detail and charm of natural materials used in a traditional manner. To build houses which complement the character of Cornwall will take a sympathetic and understanding eye in partnership with construction skill and craftsmanship.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

■ Avoid the use of standard house types that take no, or little, account of the traditional style of Cornwall.



Traditional Cornish cottage - note how simple it is!



A new farmhouse at Pensilva which reflects the local vernacular.



A good example of low cost modern housing at Lerryn.

H O U S E S

Whenever possible avoid 'mock' materials. Aim for the honest and authentic. Real stonework, real stained glass, real timber, real slate etc. If necessary, simplify plan and built form in order to afford these, or better quality 'man-made' alternatives.

Consider commissioning a professional architect or designer, especially on sensitive sites such as in Conservation Areas or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. They can steer you through the regulations, the design constraints and generally speed up the process of building your new house.

Traditionally many houses were only one room deep, and this generated a narrow rectangular form which was extended by lean-to or sequential additions (generating additive forms). Aim to restrict spans and work on additive principles. Avoid big boxy near-square plan forms, with integral garages, all covered by a single span shallow pitch roof. The resulting shape is inevitably alien to the Cornish scene.

Keep the building form very simple. Avoid complicated roof shapes, exaggerated and random changes in ridge line, and complex plan forms. Money spent on inappropriate complexity can be better spent on good quality natural materials.

Aim for simple unbroken eaves lines running parallel with the road. Avoid purely decorative gablets. Any exposed gables should be of a narrow span and subservient to the main roof. See section E ROOFS factsheet. The use of gable style dormers can be useful in reducing the roof ridge height, where a new building is to be fitted amongst existing older cottages.

Avoid imitation styles. Haciendas and chalets are the vernacular building traditions of Spain and Switzerland, and are not appropriate to Caradon District.

Detached houses should be of a double-fronted plan form (i.e. central front door). Narrow frontage detached properties tend to look unstable and gappy - resembling a row of teeth!



Modern timber house near Portwrinkle fits well in its coastal setting, sheltering behind a hedgebank and pine tree.



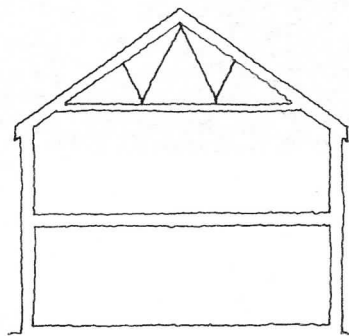
A large detached family house built of local stone with slate hanging.



Avoid narrow frontage detached properties.

H O U S E S

- Avoid arbitrary changes of materials - a change in material should reflect a change in structural function.
- Cornwall is traditionally a place of subdued, grey and pastel tones and locally distinct materials. Minimise the range of materials and colours. Avoid bright garish colours, especially in structural elements such as roofs and walls.
- Aim to provide chimneys to family housing - it provides a choice of heating, a means of natural ventilation (unpowered) thereby reducing the risk of condensation, and adds interest to the roofscape.
- Consider and develop the external appearance at the same time as the internal plan arrangement.
- New development should respect and reflect the best qualities of its architectural neighbours. Consider, comparative height and size (scale), colour, materials and the visual emphasis of openings. Modern houses often appear far too large and out of scale within traditional streetscape. Consider reducing floor to ceiling heights, and partly extending bedrooms within the roof space to retain a low eaves line.
- Consider the proportion of void to solid on any facade. Generally the total area of window and door openings should not exceed one third of the total wall area. Gable end and north facing walls may benefit from an even lower ratio of opening to wall (see the WALLS factsheet).
- Terraced or rows of houses increase density - reducing energy consumption, and creating clearly defined spaces and streetscapes. Short and long terraces are found throughout Caradon district. The nuisance of 'noisy neighbours' can be effectively reduced by the construction of dense concrete block, triple skin party walls, and the use of double glazing set well back in reveal. Plan layouts should not be 'handed' (i.e. mirror image) so that neighbouring living rooms are separated by circulation space.



Raised-tie trussed rafters can help reduce the eaves height by partly extending the bedrooms into the roof space.



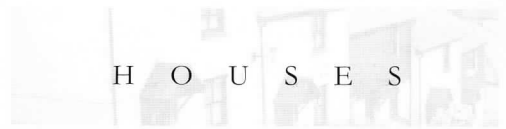
A terrace of simple modern cottages in Liskeard, stepping down a steep gradient in the traditional manner.



The design of elements such as balconies or conservatories need especial care if they are not to look 'stuck on' or inappropriate.



Note the use of simple ashlar lintels and quoins in conjunction with a warm coloured pebbledash.

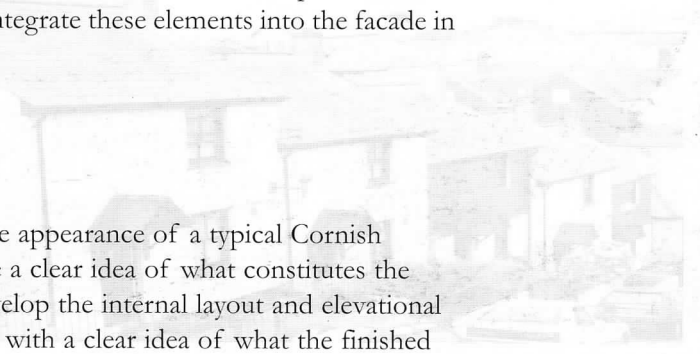


Example of good low cost housing at Harrowbarrow. Good design does not have to cost more. Note the simple, double fronted form.

- House plans should generally be flat-fronted, except for porches, with subtle breaks in the building line or exposed gables used to create and define external spaces or focal points in the streetscene. Avoid elements which merely 'jazz up' an individual dwelling.
- Windows should generally line-up over each other - although a skilled designer will be able to create a visually balanced elevation with a less regular pattern of openings. The size of opening should suit the room. Very small bathroom, cloakroom or landing windows can help add 'rhythm' to a facade (see WINDOWS factsheet).
- Consider the position and detailing of elements such as TV satellites, bin stores and meter boxes to minimise their impact. Bin stores and meters may be situated within accessible ventilated cupboards, with well designed doors to help integrate these elements into the facade in a non-obtrusive manner.

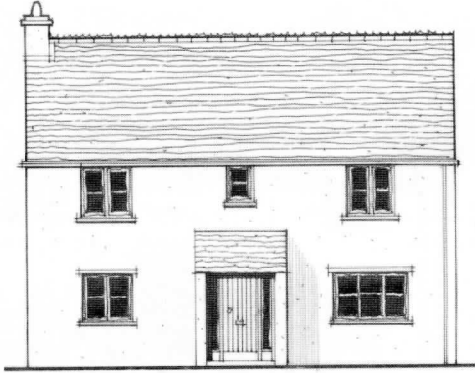
TYPICAL PLAN FORMS

In order to achieve the simple appearance of a typical Cornish house, it is important to have a clear idea of what constitutes the quintessential character. Develop the internal layout and elevational treatment simultaneously, and with a clear idea of what the finished building will look like.

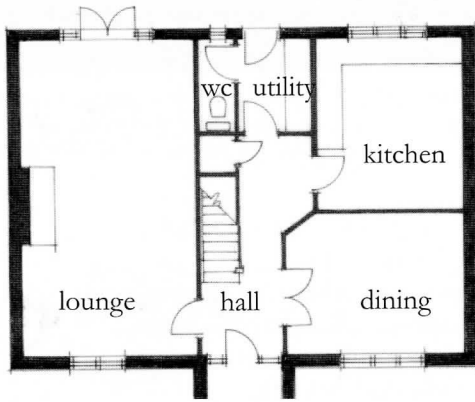


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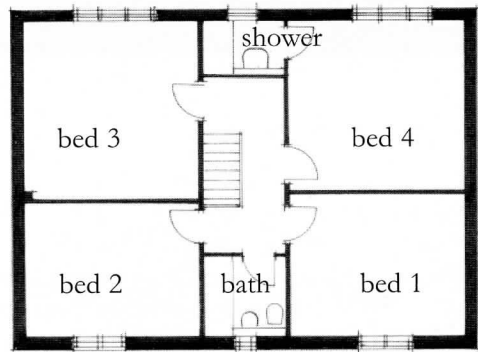
The example below shows how this principle could be applied to a traditional house design.



Front Elevation



Ground Floor Plan



First Floor Plan

- Plan forms are generally simple and additive, this principle can apply to both larger and smaller houses. Generally a double fronted design is more suitable for detached houses.
- Traditional Cornish buildings have small windows to minimise heat loss in exposed conditions. This principle should apply in particular to north-facing elevations, which do not benefit from passive solar gain.
- Chimneys were generally situated on a gable/party wall.

HOUSE PLANS AND THE CREATION OF STREETS

Changes in direction i.e. corners or curves, are a particular challenge in generating cohesive streetscape. It is therefore useful to develop a variety of house plans which are capable of turning internal and external corners, or have a tapered or canted plan form capable of creating curves or crescents. It is almost impossible to create enclosure and streetscape using open-plan type layouts.

H O U S E S

Avoid projecting eaves

Avoid applied stonework

Avoid shutters & windows of horizontal emphasis

Avoid mock-'Georgian' porticos

Avoid balconies

Avoid interlocking concrete tiles

Avoid bay-windows



Avoid modern bargeboards & box soffitt details

Avoid flat roofs

Avoid double garage doors

Avoid sawn stonework



Traditional chimney and slate 'pot'

Visible lintel

Climbers & shrubs soften the appearance of a building and create an established setting

Smooth lime-rich render

Windows tucked up under eaves

Simple open porch with suitable door

Steeper pitched roof

Slate verge detail

Windows of vertical emphasis

Simple slate roof with red terracotta ridge



Use gables sparingly - to create focal points and enclosure

Stone laid in the correct manner

Brickwork or granite quoins

Workshop - note additive form

Vertically boarded single garage doors

