



Chilterns

Buildings Design Guide

Foreword

An integral part of the outstanding Chilterns' landscape is its wealth of attractive villages and buildings. Many older buildings demonstrate good design and construction practice in relation to siting and orientation, the sourcing of materials, the ability to be repaired and thermal mass. The task of the Chilterns Conservation Board is to ensure the special qualities of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are conserved and enhanced. The first edition of the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide (published in 1999) provided guidance about the erection of new buildings and the extension and conversion of older ones. In the same year the annual Chilterns Buildings Design Awards scheme was instigated. This is still run in conjunction with The Chiltern Society and celebrates projects that have made a positive contribution.

The Design Guide has been supplemented by a series of Technical Notes on the use of flint, brick and roofing materials in the Chilterns. In addition environmental guidelines for the management of highways in the Chilterns have been produced. By disseminating this information the Board has done much to promote good design in the Chilterns over the past decade, and it is gratifying to see Design and Access Statements making reference to this advice and translating it into more carefully constructed and detailed buildings.

Nevertheless, pressures for development, both in the AONB and the surrounding area, have intensified. Increased housing allocations are placing strains on larger settlements around the margins of the AONB, infilling threatens to destroy the openness of many villages, the unsympathetic conversion of redundant buildings continues to erode rural character. At the same time, the framework for controlling development has continued to evolve.

There is now greater awareness of the need to ensure that developments are sustainable in their design and construction with more thought being given to the use of locally produced building materials for example. The potential impacts of climate change are also being addressed with better insulation, the use of renewable energy technologies and adaptations for severe weather events.

The Board decided that a review process should be instigated. This has involved a consideration of the whole document. The Board is keen to stress that design really matters and that it is important to get the details right from the outset. The decisions made today will produce buildings that will last for 100 years or more so we must ensure that we choose materials that will weather well and must allow enough space for landscaping that is

provided to reach maturity. If these decisions are poorly made the passage of time will not be kind.

This second edition of the Design Guide has therefore been produced to provide updated guidance and contribute to the maintenance of the Chilterns' landscape for future generations.

Sir John Johnson
Chairman
Chilterns Conservation Board

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Landscape setting

3.89 Checklist

- Hedges and walls are preferable to fencing and in many cases hedges are preferable to walls
- Woven 'larchlap' panel and close board fences should not be used
- Do not use concrete blockwork
- Entrance gates should be simple and visibly permeable and ornamental railings should be avoided
- Avoid 'gardening' the road verge
- Don't treat the spaces between buildings as simply 'leftover' - design them into the whole development
- Locally common, locally sourced native species are preferred for landscaping, especially within and adjoining open countryside. Avoid fast growing exotic species, especially cypress and laurel
- Don't use too many different surface materials and avoid the use of highly coloured concrete paviers
- Limit the area of asphalt
- Ensure any surfacing materials are porous
- Don't use concrete kerbs, fake cobbles and patterned concrete which are suburbanising features
- Consider bound gravel finishes in place of asphalt areas

Boundaries

3.90 Brick walls, possibly incorporating flint and half round cappings, fences and hedges are the traditional forms of property boundary in the Chilterns. Older properties are often enclosed by a wall using similar materials to the house itself. In some villages, especially estate villages, walls, railings, fences and hedges can be specific to the location creating a distinct sense of place.

3.91 Walls can be used to 'tie buildings together' creating visually attractive linkages, as well as delineating boundaries, screening and enclosing one area from another. As with walls for buildings, the details of brick colour and texture, of pointing and the use of flint, needs to be carefully chosen to be in keeping with the traditions of the area. Retaining walls need particular care. Concrete blockwork for boundary walls, and paving flags laid to retain banks are not appropriate in the Chilterns.



This wall is an attractive feature in its own right. (Hailey)



Boundary hedges complement the buildings and contribute to the rural character of the lane. (Lee Common)



The garden wall matches the house. (Little Missenden)



Elaborate entrances are usually more suburban than rural in character and should be avoided. (Ipsden)

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Boundary treatment and surface materials

3.92 Waist-high timber fences such as picket fences or post and rail fences where adjacent to farmland, are in keeping with most village or rural surroundings, can be supplemented by a hedge using locally common native species and are the form of enclosure preferred by the Board. Simple metal bar railings were characteristic of large houses and estates, but ornamental railings are urban and out of place in rural areas. The strong geometric shapes of close board fencing, larchlap or other solid fences, are too dominating and are cumbersome on slopes. They are also prone to wind damage and rot and require regular maintenance to avoid looking tatty and are therefore not appropriate.

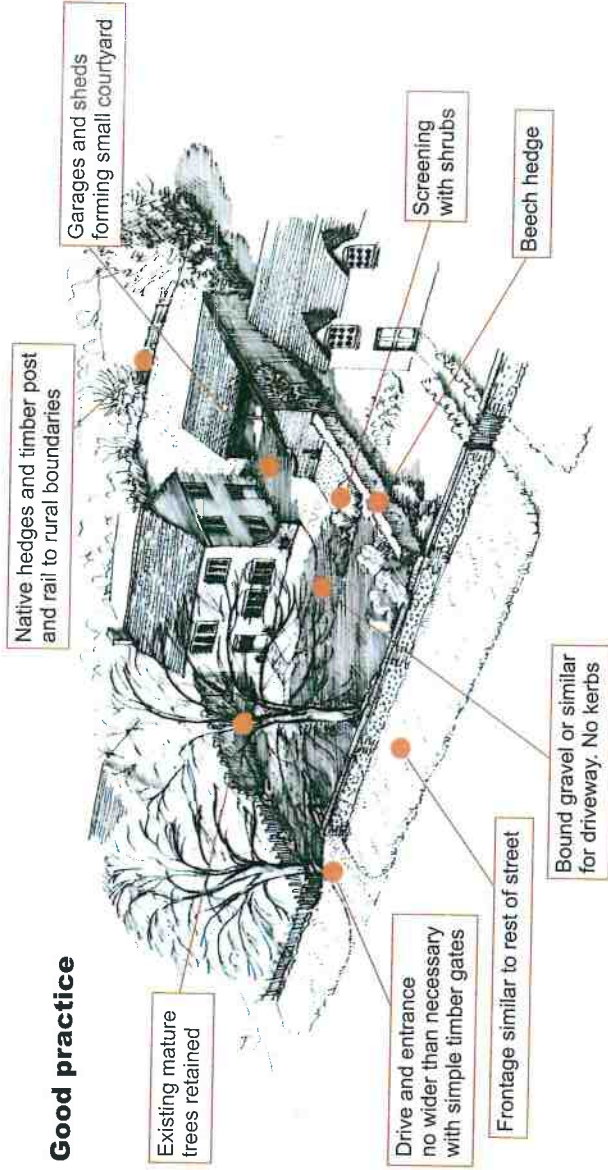


Simple and permeable gates can still be obtained and should be used where possible. (Harpsden above and Britwell Salome, credit Richard Bossons and Paul Sargeantson)



3.93 Entrance, and any other, gates should be simple and visually permeable, either matching the boundary fencing or typical farm gates in the area, and timber should be used as it is more attractive than tubular steel. Ornate, high and solid gates and entrances incorporating security systems are out of place in the countryside.

3.94 It is not traditional for gardens to be open to the road unless they are very narrow. In some villages and usually in the open countryside, grass verges are common. It is inappropriate for these to be taken over by adjacent properties and 'gardened' with manicured flower beds and close-mown grass, as this introduces an inharmonious suburban character.

Good practice**Poor practice**