

## INTRODUCTION

Notwithstanding offering support for farm diversification and the setting aside of agricultural land, Government policy is still generally negative and restrictive towards the building of new houses in the countryside.

Angus District Council, however, recognised that there was a demand, indeed a need, for some new houses in the countryside and, therefore, its policies were more supportive than in many other parts of Scotland. Clearly a free-for-all cannot and does not exist and a number of criteria, as specified in the Local Plan, must first be met.

Numerous sites did meet these criteria and despite advice on design being offered through the earlier versions of this Advice Note, many completed houses continued to attract criticism. In acknowledgement of this criticism, the design advice offered by the Council was revised in order to more adequately protect, for local and visitor alike, that very valuable asset - the Angus countryside. This updated advice has now been adopted and reissued by Angus Council.

The advice endeavours to halt some trends which have attracted particular criticism and is based on the standpoint that all new houses should make a positive contribution to the rural scene and not detract from it.

The design of a house for the countryside is a challenge, far more so than a town or village development and by following the advice contained in this note, an effort to produce a product that respects the countryside and local tradition and avoids the persistent use of designs more at home in a suburban situation, you should be rewarded with a planning approval.

## DESIGN ADVICE

The extent to which the Council will expect the following advice to be heeded will vary according to the prominence of the location and the extent to which the elevations are viewed by the public

ACCORDINGLY THERE WILL BE A MORE FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO IMPOSING THE ADVICE ON SITES REMOTE FROM PUBLIC VIEW OR WHERE WELL SCREENED BY THE LAND FORM OR NATURAL SCREENING.

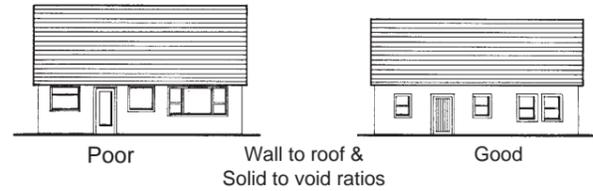
Neither is it the intention of this note to stifle original design in the Angus countryside, its prime purpose being to bring about a reduction in the mundane or out of character houses that are becoming the norm.

ACCORDINGLY THERE WILL BE A MORE FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO IMPOSING THE FOLLOWING ADVICE ON PROPOSALS WHICH DEMONSTRATE DESIGN FLAIR AND THOUGHT IN PRODUCING A HOUSE SUITED TO A RURAL ANGUS LOCATION.

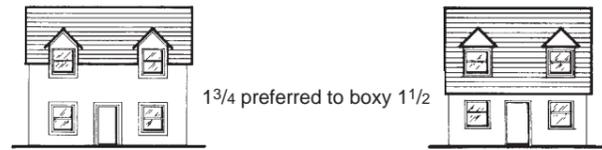
Especially in achieving the latter, THE SERVICES OF A CHARTERED ARCHITECT ARE STRONGLY RECOMMENDED.

1. **FORM/SCALE** A satisfactory composition depends on plan depth, roof pitch, length of frontage, etc. Modern standards in these respects make it difficult to achieve traditional or even satisfactory proportions. Providing specific advice in this context is not easy but a balanced composition should be the objective.

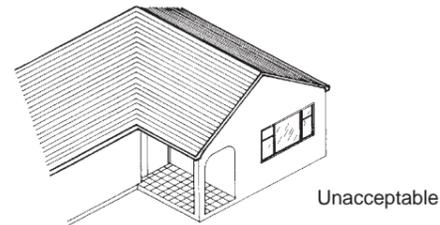
- (i) Plan Shape: plans based on rectangles should be preferred over square forms and T shapes over L.
- (ii) Wall to Roof Ratio: perhaps the most important element of the composition. Over-dominant roofs must be avoided. In single storey houses the wall to roof ratio should not exceed 1:1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>, on 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> storeys 1:1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> will be the maximum allowed.
- (iii) Solid to Void: new houses should recreate the traditional character of solidity. The wall to void (windows and doors) ratio on public elevations should not be less than 5:1.



- (iv) Roof Ridgelines: long, unbroken ridgelines should be avoided. Introduce variation into roof height and pattern.
- (v) Height: many modern 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> storey designs are far too tall and boxy, especially if it has a small floor plan. Many standard designs will fail the wall to roof ratio. Preferred options are: revert to single storey if small; 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> will generally be sympathetically received; or even a full two storeys may achieve a better composition.

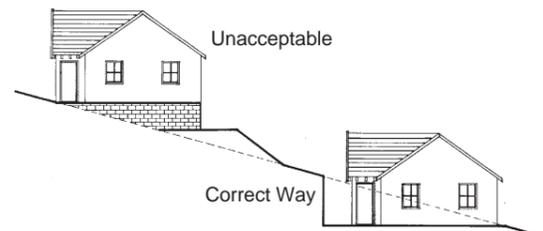


- (vi) Avoid Disruptive Features: such as cut-away front porches. Fine in town but with no rural tradition and a tendency to destroy the symmetry of a design. The same can be said for balconies on public elevations.



2. **SITING** Sloping sites call for particular care as few houses are designed specifically for such situations. Where sloping sites are involved, detailed plans may be demanded at the outline stage.

- (i) Underbuilding: excessive underbuilding is visually destructive and will not be acceptable if viewed by the public.

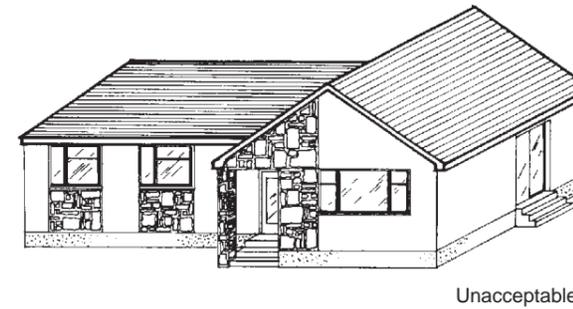


- (ii) Terracing: in order to avoid underbuilding, sites are sometimes relevelled to create a raised terrace. This too is an unacceptable solution.
- (iii) Split-Level Housing: a sloping site may demand a unique solution utilising split floor levels. However, a standard design over a garage does not constitute such a solution.

- (iv) Basecourse: should not be in a contrasting colour to the walls above but should be a close match.

3. **WALLS** The impact of a new house in the countryside will to a large extent be determined by its walls and in particular the colour.

- (i) Feature Panels: comprising part of an elevation are very much a suburban feature, out of character in the countryside and accordingly will no longer be permitted. Permissible may be complete elevations finished in natural stone or gable ends in some materials that complement the colour of the other walls.



- (ii) Number of Materials: from the above it is clear that a maximum of two materials will be allowed and preferably it should be one (excluding basecourses and window margins).

- (iii) Bricks: are alien to the Angus countryside and will not be accepted as an external finish, except as a basecourse.

- (iv) Colour: light colours make a building appear larger, more conspicuous and closer, it attracts attention. Light colours (i.e. white, cream, champagne, buff, etc.) will, therefore, only be allowed under certain conditions e.g. where all adjacent buildings are light coloured, where the building, in the opinion of the planning authority is of such merit as to warrant the prominence a light colour will produce and in locations hidden from public view. Where a light colour is acceptable, a traditional wet dash will be preferred.

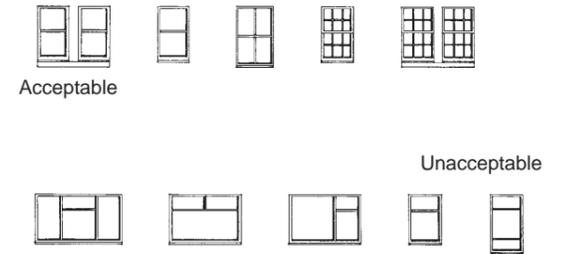
- (v) Timber: totally timber clad houses will only be acceptable in exceptional (such as wooded) circumstances.

4. **WINDOWS AND DOORS** The windows can make or break a design, particularly in the countryside where a major feature of an individual house will be the appearance of the windows.

- (i) Vertical Proportions: too many horizontally proportioned windows have been permitted in the past and the Council intends a stricter policy to be applied to windows on public elevations. Here windows should be no wider than one metre, whilst depth should exceed

width on all but the smallest, minor windows. Larger areas of glazing will be accommodated by positioning two or more such windows side by side with a solid (not timber) mullion or division of at least 200mm between and finished the same as the walls.

- (ii) Style: windows on public elevations should respect and echo traditional styles in appearance and should match through. Illustrated are some examples of acceptable and unacceptable styles.



- (iii) Patio Doors/French Windows: are very popular but especially eye-catching and alien in rural areas. They will not be allowed on public elevations even if it is the only one south facing.

- (iv) Bay/Bow Windows: again should be avoided on the main elevations.

- (v) Window to Eaves Relationship: windows should not disappear into the roof, there must be visual evidence of walling (lintel) between windows and eaves.

- (vi) Doors: doors on rural dwellings have traditionally been simple timber affairs. Highly glazed doors and particularly side panels, must be avoided and fancy entrance features (arches etc.) will not be acceptable.

- (vii) Orientation: where the back of a house faces the public road, perhaps to utilise a view, the treatment of windows and doors will require particularly careful handling. It will probably be necessary to create the impression of it being a second front!

5. **ROOF TO WALL JUNCTION** A feature which amplifies and confirms that a house is modern is the current practice of using excessive amounts of timber around eaves and gables.

- (i) Eaves: heavy boxed eaves and the even heavier, clumsy corners ("club-feet") are to be eliminated. Exposed rafter ends are a much more acceptable feature and will receive every encouragement.

- (ii) Overhang: the extent by which the roof overhangs the walls, particularly on the gables, must be minimised.

- (iii) Gable Bargeboarding: should preferably be eliminated but where this is impractical, minimal timber should be used, painted to complement the walls.

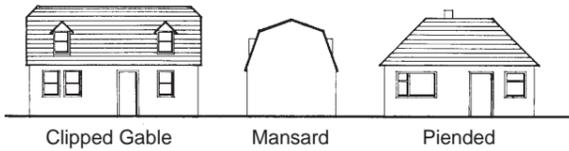
## 6. ROOF

- (i) Materials: roofs should be covered in dark blue/grey materials, preferably slate. There are, however, a number of slate lookalikes now available and these will generally receive sympathetic consideration, albeit they will rarely involve a significant cost saving. These do not include standard concrete tiles which will be restricted to houses distant from public roads or adjacent to buildings similarly clad.

- (ii) Pitch: traditionally rural houses would, as a general rule, have a 40° or even 45° pitch but because modern houses are much deeper, this can produce a top-heavy

appearance. As a general rule then 35° will be the minimum acceptable but see also section on "Form/Scale".

(iii) Styles: mansard roofs and clipped gables (a particularly recent introduction) will not be acceptable in Angus. Piended roofs will be discouraged, especially when the ridge is short. Mixing of roof styles on the same building is unacceptable.



(iv) Ventilation: tile vents, whilst effective and functional are a modern and unacceptable eyesore in the countryside.

(v) Chimneys: the provision of chimneys will be encouraged. Every effort should be made to design the chimney so as to emerge through the ridge. Floor to roof "stuck-on" gable chimneys will not be acceptable unless every effort has been made to integrate them into the overall design or they are not readily visible

**7. DORMERS** Dormers can be particularly effective (if well designed) in adding visual interest to an otherwise monotonous roofscape.

(i) Style: the use of small, traditional style dormers will be encouraged and may be demanded where felt essential to make a 1 1/2 storey house visually acceptable. Box dormers will not be acceptable.

(ii) Materials: generally dormers will require to be finished in materials to match the roof.

**8. PORCHES** Small porches are a traditional feature of rural houses and could provide a viable alternative to the over-elaborate entrances which will not be accepted.

(i) Scale: overlarge porches cum conservatories should be avoided on the public elevation. Porches were traditionally small!

(ii) Materials: roofs should be pitched and clad in the same material as the house, there might however be some scope for alternative but complementary materials to be used on the walls. Traditionally, for instance, porches were often of timber construction.

**9. GARAGES** A tendency at the planning stage to pay little attention to this nevertheless important adjunct to the house.

(i) Integral or Detached: integral garages will often jeopardise the composition of a house, making it too long or bulky and leads to the breaching of other guidelines, e.g. length of ridge or the solid to void ratio and thus producing a planning refusal. Detached but carefully sited garages are recommended.

(ii) Materials: should always match the house.

(iii) Design: flat roofs will not be acceptable. Double garages should have two separate doors when open to public view.

**10. BOUNDARY TREATMENT** Many very acceptable designs have been spoiled by a poor choice of boundary treatment. The advice is to:-

- (i) retain drystone dykes, hedges etc., and
- (ii) avoid alien, often suburban fences and walls, preferred are stone dykes, walls harled and coped with natural stone, native hedging, perhaps palisade or pale fencing and even the ubiquitous post and wire fence.

**11. LANDSCAPING** Both existing and proposed landscaping can be very important in settling a new house into the countryside and reducing the otherwise raw, intrusive impression that can be created. The Council will be looking for evidence that landscaping has been taken into consideration in any planning application and conditions requiring landscaping proposals and tree planting will be commonplace.

**12. OTHER FEATURES** There are a number of "optional" features which can add traditional touches or interest to a new house. Several are listed below and while there is no intention to demand their use in all instances, they may help (but certainly not guarantee) your proposal to secure planning approval:-

- (i) Window/Door Margins: structurally unnecessary but they are very much a Scottish vernacular feature which is appreciated by most members of the public.
- (ii) Tabling: another vernacular feature which builders today seem to avoid but one that can add genuine character and individuality to a house.
- (iii) Rybats/Quoins: a traditional detailing feature again rarely performing a structural function today, but if some form of individual treatment is sought, then worth considering. Colour should complement not contrast with the walls.
- (iv) Dummy Chimneys: genuine chimneys are covered above (see roof) but it is acknowledged that not everyone wishes an open fire. Because of this many modern houses have a very uninteresting, deficient appearance to the roof. Provision of a realistic, dummy chimney can overcome this and provide a major visual boost, in the correct position of course!

**13. NEIGHBOURLINESS** A new house should respect its neighbours. This will encompass many factors such as roof material colour, wall finishes, building line, respecting privacy and avoiding over-looking but perhaps most importantly, a new house should not dominate its neighbours. If the neighbouring properties consist of or include modern houses of the type that this Advice Note discourages, then the planning authority reserves the right to seek improvements, e.g. wall colour, and will not necessarily accept simple repetition.

**14. REPLACEMENTS** Where in terms of Council policy demolition and replacement is permitted, it should not be assumed that a dwelling significantly removed from the original's location or significantly larger, will be acceptable. It is accepted, however, that some old dwellings are very small and a slightly larger replacement will be permitted but don't expect to replace a but n'ben with a five bedroom villa. Re-use of existing material will be expected in the case of replacement houses where that material is worthy of re-use.

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*The design of any new house in the countryside is a challenge, one which a good designer should be able to rise to, thus making the above advice largely redundant. Unfortunately it will be very appropriate in the majority of cases. Building a house in the countryside cannot be*

*regarded simply as a private transaction. There is a public interest in the end result. Accordingly if you are fortunate enough to secure a planning consent for a new house in the countryside:-*

### BE WARNED

YOU MAY NOT BE ABLE TO BUILD THE HOUSE OF YOUR CHOICE OR DREAMS.

YOU MAY NOT BE ALLOWED TO USE THE ROOF OR WALL FINISH OF YOUR CHOICE.

YOU MAY HAVE TO USE A DARK TINTED ROUGHCAST WHEN YOU ALWAYS WANTED A LIGHT COLOUR.

YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED A PICTURE WINDOW OR PATIO DOORS ON THE FRONT OF YOUR HOUSE.

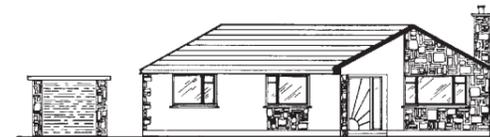
YOU MAY NOT BE ALLOWED AN INTEGRAL GARAGE.

YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO PLANT TREES.

MEETING THE PLANNING CONDITIONS MAY COST YOU A LITTLE MORE THAN YOU EXPECTED.

*and most definitely* YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO POINT TO EXAMPLES FROM THE PAST TO JUSTIFY BREACHES OF THIS ADVICE NOTE!

This will not be acceptable:-



But the same accommodation can be provided in an acceptable fashion:-



*For further information and advice contact:*

Planning & Transport  
Angus Council  
County Buildings  
Market Street  
Forfar  
DD8 3LG

Telephone 01307 461460

**Angus Council**



**ADVICE NOTE 5**

**HOUSES IN  
THE OPEN  
COUNTRYSIDE**