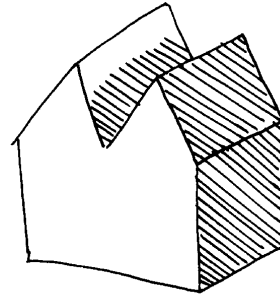


RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDANCE

Introduction

The policies in this Local Plan in line with government advice seek to achieve a high standard of design and layout for residential development. Generally, development should be designed to fit in with the landscape context and the features of the site. It should also be designed to reflect the traditional building form of its surroundings to add to local distinctiveness.





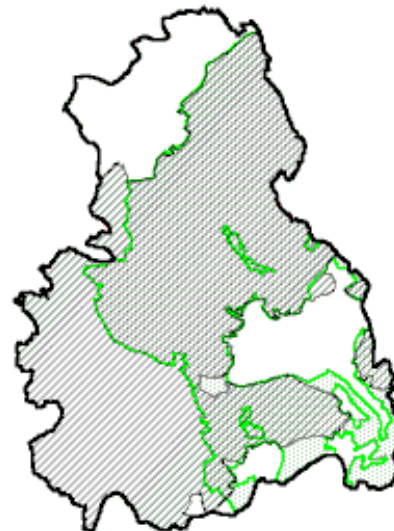
These guidelines are not intended to stifle good design and innovation. Where designers can demonstrate their proposals cause no harm whilst departing from the criteria and positively enhancing their setting, favourable consideration may be given.

Guidance in Planning Policy Guidance Note 1: General Policy and Principles (PPG1, February 1997) and in 'By Design' (May 2000) encourage good design in the development process everywhere, and in particular that local distinctiveness is protected by development respecting the character of the area. Revised PPG3: Housing (March 2000) applies this advice to residential development, encouraging Local Planning Authorities and developers to think imaginatively about designs and layouts which make more effective use of land. Reference is again made to considerations of design and layout being informed by the wider context. This appendix is intended to further explain Wycombe's unique context, and contains detailed guidelines to support and expand on the policies of this Local Plan.

As residential areas in the District vary significantly in character, it is not appropriate to have a single set of criteria. Therefore these guidelines have been divided into sections dealing with:

1. **Wycombe's unique context;**
2. **Respecting Established Local Character;**
4. **Design guidelines for Residential Enhancement Zones;**
5. **Design guidelines for high density residential development;**
6. **Design guidelines for 'car free' residential development;**
7. **Design guidelines for the Countryside, including the AONB and Green Belt.**

-  Green Belt
-  The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



1. Wycombe's Unique Context

Topography

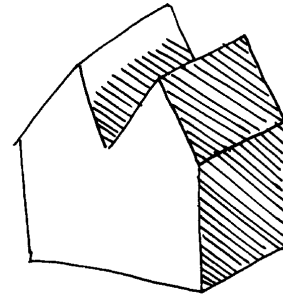
Most of Wycombe District is within the dry valley portion of the Chilterns AONB. A small area to the north falls within the Vale of Aylesbury, a flatter open landscape, and a small portion to the south falls within the Thames Valley. The District is dominated by this distinct topography. Traditionally, development was confined to the valley floors but more recent development has taken place on valley sides, hill tops, plateaux and other prominent locations.

When considering proposals for development, Wycombe's unique context should be taken into account in the following way:

Roofscape

Where roofscape is visible from a wide range of views, for example, in a valley bottom location, the following guidance should be followed:

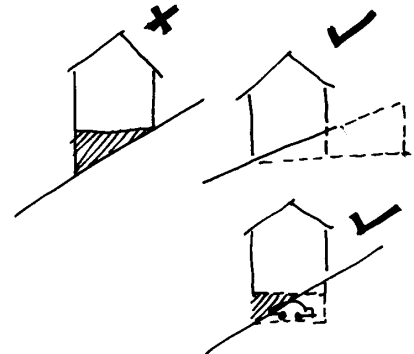
- The roof form is part of the overall design concept and roof plans and three-dimensional views may be required to assess proposals.
- False roof pitches, designed to be viewed from the ground, may often be inappropriate due to views from surrounding areas.
- Building elements should have narrow spans so that large bulky roofs are not created. Where a large span is unavoidable, a multiple-pitch approach may be a better solution.



Development on Slopes

Much development in Wycombe is on sloping ground. This should be used as a design opportunity to create innovative solutions. Advantage may be taken of the design opportunities given by sloping sites, such as the use of split levels and creation of partly underground storage accommodation. There is no particular rule for developing either along or across the slope, as both types are common within the District, but the following guidelines will help to achieve the best solution on sloping sites:

- In order for the development along or across a slope to fit against the hillside, it should be landscaped into the slope rather than 'built up' to provide a level surface. When using retaining walls on sloping sites, care must be taken to avoid compromising the aspect, freedom from shade or enclosure, to allow viable amenity space.
- If building up from the slope is unavoidable, use can be made of the lower half level, for example, for parking or utility rooms, cut partly into the slope.
- Fitting the building into the slope becomes particularly critical on steeper slopes, and when the development is towards the tops of the hills, normally above the 100m contour line, to minimise the visual impact.



Skylines

Since Wycombe is a hilly district, important hill top locations should be protected from intrusive development. Where residential development is acceptable in relation to Policy G7, the following design considerations need to be taken into account:

- **The extent, height and roof profiles of new residential building.**

- **The prominence and distant visibility of new housing.**
- **The need for woodland planting and preservation in the area of development.**

Building Materials

Traditional buildings in the Chilterns were of locally available materials, such as flint, clay and hardwood. New buildings should reflect this tradition by the use of good quality and locally appropriate materials that may however include non-traditional items or innovative forms of architectural expression.

Wycombe now displays a wide variety of materials, but generally the predominance is orange/red brick, and plain tiled or slate roofs. Modern equivalents of the more traditional materials may be acceptable, particularly where these are of good quality, and approximate well to the appearance and characteristics of the original materials. The use of flint is still widespread in the more rural areas, and is appropriate to such locations, however the introduction of flint into an otherwise poor design does not make it acceptable.

2. Respecting Established Local Character

In addition to the unique circumstances that shape the character of Wycombe District at the broad level by virtue of geology, topography and landscape, each site has its own set of local characteristics.

Advice contained in the DETR/CABE publication “By Design” stresses the need for development to respect its local character, and states that good design always arises from a thorough and caring understanding of place and context.

In order to assess the character of the local area it is necessary to identify the elements of development that contribute to that character. The document “By Design” suggests these are as follows:

- **Layout: Urban Structure** – the framework of spaces and routes and how they connect to one another
- **Layout: Urban Grain** – The pattern of street blocks, plots and the frequency of plot subdivision
- **Landscape** – including open space and its planting
- **Density and Mix** – this shapes the intensity of use of an area and its vitality
- **Scale: Height** – Size, this may have impact on views, vistas and skylines
- **Scale: Massing** – the three dimensional expression of the development
- **Appearance: Details** - mainly features on the elevation
- **Appearance: Materials** - colour, texture and durability are all important

All the above aspects must be respected to achieve new development that sits happily with its neighbours. Policy G3 sets the parameters

against which an application for development will be judged.

Residential areas derive their character from either the uniformity of the built form, or from a more random setting and variety of built form. Local communities place considerable value upon their surroundings, when unsympathetic developments are introduced the character of an area will be eroded.

An aspect of the established character of residential areas that should be respected is the pattern of open space, green space, gardens and significant gaps that contribute to the layout of the area and the street scene. Open spaces, whether public or private are often an essential part of the character in urban areas and can contribute to local ecology by encouraging wildlife. Sufficient space between buildings to allow planting to mature is essential to promote "greener residential environments" espoused by PPG3.

Particular care is needed with new development that is proposed in areas with strong vernacular design character, these are often within or adjacent to Conservation Areas. The Council has a programme of character assessment for Conservation Areas, these should be the starting point for the design consideration of new development in or adjacent to such areas.

3. General design guidelines that apply to all residential development

These criteria are designed to create an environment which is:

- Attractive;
- Functionally efficient;
- Effective in reducing the opportunity for crime; and
- Makes best use of scarce land.

Highway Standards and Layout

All residential areas must be designed such that vehicles cannot achieve speeds of more than 20mph. The most effective way of reducing this is to reduce the forward visibility, and this will generally create more interesting residential layouts. The Buckinghamshire County Council Highways Design Guide specifies the standards for road layout and adoption, and is therefore not repeated here. Proposals should also comply with the relevant requirements of Policies T1, T4, T5, T7 and T13.

Community Safety

In considering development proposals regard will be had to the Community Safety aspect of the scheme. Regard will be had to the relevant requirements of Policy G26 in relation to distinguishing public and private areas, natural surveillance and planting, and the advice of the Police Crime Prevention Design Adviser.

Frontage Development

- Development should always front access roads and footpaths. It is possible that flanks can also face the access road, but the front door should be visible from the road or footpath. This is known as 'frontage development'.
- The backs of buildings and plots should not be adjacent to



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access roads or footpaths. This is known as 'exposed backs'.

- The backs of plots and buildings should back onto one another, with no rear access. This helps with:
 - (a) Amenity – private/quiet areas are contiguous – noisy comings and goings restricted to fronts or accesses;
 - (b) Concentrates activity at front ('eyes on the street', or 'natural policing');
 - (c) Ensures maximum distances for privacy at rear of dwellings; and
 - (d) No access for criminals 'around the back', where there is no natural surveillance. Criminals have to cross threshold at the front of the house, where surveillance is best – 'eyes on the street', across the street.

There is one exception to this rule. Where terrace properties require rear access for wheeled bins, delivery and removal of materials for building or gardening, such rear access points may be acceptable. Access should only be through the frontage, by the means of a locked gate. The rear access paths should not connect directly to adjoining roads.

Backland Development

Backland development should be handled carefully. To be acceptable, backland development should be dealt with comprehensively rather than in isolation. Comprehensive treatment will avoid situations as shown in the example. Further requirements are listed below.

A backland layout that results in a single row of new dwellings facing the backs of existing dwellings is unacceptable as it gives rise to:

- Unnecessary noise, disturbance and vehicle fumes to the rear quiet amenity space of the frontage dwellings;
- Potential for criminal access to the rear of the frontage dwellings; and
- Compromised privacy of the rear gardens of frontage plots, by intruding on the private realm of the existing development.

A fundamental requirement for successful backland development is for the backland plot to be a sufficient depth to accommodate new dwellings in a way which provides a quality residential environment for the new and existing residents.

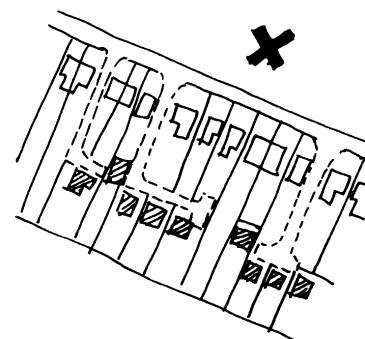
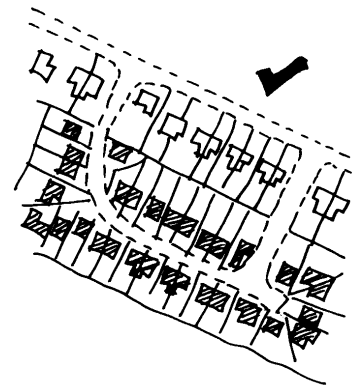
Backland development must be in keeping within the scale and characteristics of the adjacent existing development.

Backland proposals must still leave enough space and amenity area for the frontage properties.

The backland development should be designed to have a legible layout, i.e. one that is easily understood. This is achieved by clearly defining the public and private areas.

Backland proposals must take account of, and, where appropriate, incorporate, existing landscape features worthy of retention.

The shared boundary between the existing development and the new backland development must be carefully handled.



Achieving Privacy

A reasonable degree of privacy should be afforded to all residential units within the private realm (ie, the back and sides of the plot). At the front of the dwelling (the public realm frontage), residents cannot expect to achieve the same degree of privacy. Good surveillance over the street will provide natural policing, and should be encouraged.

- Privacy criteria are therefore recommended for rear to rear relationships – but none are recommended for front to front. Road access width generally determines minimum distances between the fronts of dwellings.
- The separation between facing windows in the private zone, can be achieved by a minimum distance of 25m. However, 30m is preferred. This can be achieved at no loss of overall space, if frontage distances are reduced to the minimum, for example, by back edge of pavement development, or with very small front gardens.
- Where the site is sloping, or the development has living rooms on the second floor, additional distance will be required to achieve the same privacy level.
- Generally, flank walls should not have windows, except where the window is high level, or is a light to a non-habitable room (stairs/hall or bathroom). A further exception is where the flank is effectively turned to face the road. In this instance, care would be needed with flank windows on adjacent properties

NOTE:

The particular circumstances of each case will be considered against the privacy criteria above. Where it can be demonstrated that privacy can be achieved by other means, for example, by 'controlled aspect' development, privacy distances between facing windows in the private zone may be reduced.

Public and private space at the front of the dwellings are best clearly marked out by boundary treatment i.e hedges, fences and walls to help delineate the space and indicate physically where responsibilities are, and to create more enclosed street scenes.

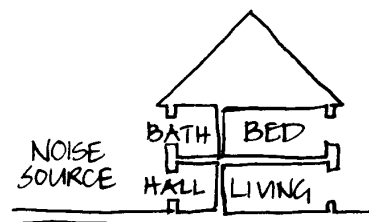
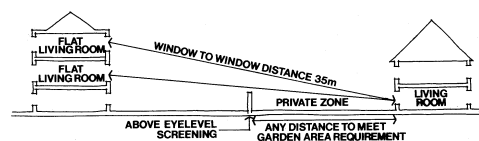
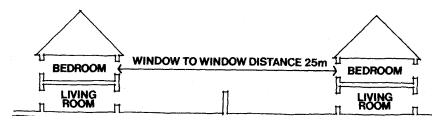
Daylight and Sunlight

Development should comply with the Building Research Establishment Report 209, 1991 – 'Site layout for planning for daylight and sunlight good practice.'

Protection From Noise

Freedom from excessive noise at evenings and weekends is a requirement for the private areas of all residential development. The easiest way to achieve this is to locate new housing away from the noise source. Given that locations within established settlements are increasingly being sought as 'sustainable' development locations, this issue can prove to be difficult particularly in town centres. Planning Policy Guidance Note 24: Planning and Noise (PPG24, September 1994) advises on appropriate thresholds.

Additional devices can be employed to avoid problems. The following are recommended solutions:



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- Careful design of the building itself, orientating habitable rooms away from the noise source;
- Using a continuous built frontage to protect from the noise source;
- Walls/acoustic fences can be used, but these should not reduce natural surveillance of the public realm; and
- Earth mounds/bunds are not recommended. They rarely integrate with the development as they present a 'blank screen'. Planting often fails on raised bunds, and is difficult to maintain.

Landscape and Planting

All new residential development should be landscaped and planted. Planting is integral to achieving quality residential environments, and should be considered at the outset of the design process.

Existing trees and significant vegetation worthy of retention, that is capable of being retained, and has the prospect of being maintained and allowed to mature for a reasonable period, should be incorporated into the development.

Landscape schemes should add to local distinctiveness by developing appropriate landscape character in terms of:

- Planting;
- Paving materials;
- Boundary treatment; and
- Furniture.

Further advice is given in the Council's Advice Note on 'Landscape and Planting'.

Quantity and Quality of Open Space – Accessible to the Public

The quantity of open space is determined by Policy H20. The quality of open space can be as important as the quantity. Where open space is provided, it should comply with the guidelines below:

- Large schemes of new residential development will need to contribute to Open Space, as defined in Policy H20;
- It need not necessarily be 'soft-green' space. It might be in the form of squares and pedestrian links – but these must be suitably landscaped and functional spaces, rather than just roads and paths;
- All open space accessible to the public must be readily overlooked by development to allow casual surveillance to provide natural policing;
- Space has to be useful to be considered as suitable open space for public use. Boundary planting that acts as a screen to development is not considered as open space in this respect, as its function is only visual;
- Where equipped play space is provided as part of the open space it must be safe, accessible and overlooked by dwellings;
- Small incidental open space (e.g. margins and verges) is not a substitute for the provision of open space in



accordance with Council standards in Policy H20. Such areas can usefully supplement the required provision, where they contribute to the character and appearance of the area, and where their maintenance is secured;

- Open space should coincide with natural features on the site, ie: streams/ponds/tree groups etc, where these are to be retained; and
- Additional consideration should be given to open space along river corridors, where these cross the site.

Services

Residential layouts must allow for adequate services to be provided. Generally, the service providers will advise on appropriate provision.

Bin storage must be allowed for in residential layouts. With the increasing role of recycling, space must be provided for recycling collection either within, or adjacent to the home. Each dwelling must have space for storage of two-wheeled bins. In multiple occupancy units ie: flats and bedsits, extra space in the communal bin area should be allocated for recycling collection.

Private Amenity Space

Private amenity space should be provided for each dwelling, although, for some flats and other developments it may be provided communally in part, and in part as private amenity space for the exclusive use of the occupants of the dwelling. More important than quantity is the quality of private amenity space and its usability. Private amenity space for flats may be simply a balcony, patio, or veranda, or as a small enclosed garden for ground floor flats, generally with enough space to allow two people to sit out (about 4 sq m). To be considered as suitable private amenity space, it should:

- Provide a sufficient degree of privacy;
- Be accessed directly from the dwelling; and
- Be of a suitable gradient, orientation and shape and freedom from excessive shade to allow enjoyment of the space.

Car Parking and Garaging

Parked cars and garages should be unobtrusively located and suitably landscaped or screened where possible. Integral garages should generally be avoided, as the effect dominates the front elevation of a dwelling, and it compromises the front door and the relationship of the dwelling to the street. Garages are often not used for parking cars, and used only for storage. This is particularly true of integral garages that have internal access to the dwelling.

The prominent positioning of a garage door at a visual stop or junction or bend in the road can be particularly damaging, as this is where landmark features should occur. The solution is a more flexible approach with priority given to creating high quality townscape.

The following is the preferred approach:

- Parking spaces allocated for residential use should be within view or under the surveillance of the dwellings they serve;

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- Drives at the side of dwellings with garages set back to allow cars to be tucked into the plot;
- Open drive-through archway through dwelling with garage to rear and visitor space under arch;
- If a garage door has to be integral, it should be set back by at least 200mm in order to reduce its impact on the elevation; and
- Where appropriate, for example on sloping sites, basement garaging may be a useful means of accommodating garages within the plot.

The following should be avoided:

- Large garage courts, where these are isolated from the dwellings they serve;
- Large detached garages set forward of the main dwelling where these would obscure natural surveillance; and
- Detached garages set forward of the main dwelling will rarely be acceptable, as the garage tends to dominate the plot creating unsatisfactory townscape.
- Underground car parks can be a useful technique in difficult situations, but can be expensive to build, and water table problems may be encountered.

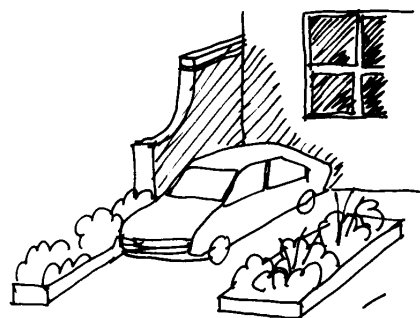
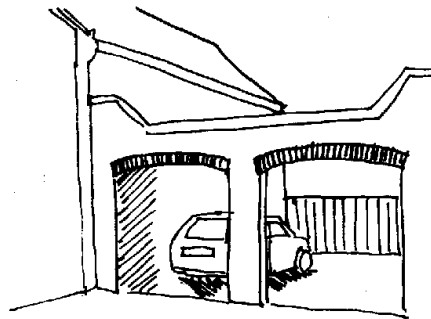
Surface/Open Parking

Where no garaging is provided, care should be taken to reduce the visual impact of the car, so it does not dominate the townscape. The following solutions are preferred:

- Long drives to the side of dwellings, preferably with a feature, such as an arch/ pergola to delineate between the public and the private realm; and
- Parking on frontage of plots, ie, within the curtilage, but divided by hedges or walls between plots. The parking area should not take up the entire width of the plot, as this leads to over dominance of car parking.

Where parking is provided in parking courts off-curtilage, the following guidelines should be followed:

- Parking spaces allocated for use should be within view of the dwellings they serve;
- Communal parking areas should be located so as not to be unduly conspicuous in the layout. A view of unrelieved parked cars in front of a terrace is unacceptable;
- Communal parking units provided at the rear of flats/terraces should be overlooked by the dwellings they serve. Access to the parking court should be defined by an entrance feature – for example archway, pergola or gate; and
- Communal parking spaces should be divided by planting, and bays should be grouped in no more than four spaces. Planting should be kept low, or trees should have clear stems and higher canopies, so as to maintain casual surveillance.



4. Design guidelines for Residential Enhancement Zones

The Residential Enhancement Zones represent important mixed-use areas close to High Wycombe Town Centre. As such, they are accessible locations providing a range of services and employment close to residential premises, offering a sustainable 'lifestyle'. They are vibrant areas that have a range of activities, sometimes not compatible to residential amenity. Where redevelopment does occur, enhancement of the environment will be sought, in particular, landscape and planting and improvements to car parking. The introduction of 'play streets' or home zones may help to address traffic and parking issues as well as providing opportunities for play areas and enhancement.

5. Design guidelines for high density residential development.

In line with advice in revised PPG3 the District Council seeks to make the best use of urban land and to this end has introduced a density criteria policy H8.

To achieve high density residential development the following guidelines generally apply:

- The majority of dwellings are aimed at smaller households, ie, 1-2 beds with limited 3-4 bed family accommodation, with a mixture of apartments and houses. Census data indicates that small dwellings are likely to have lower car ownership.

NB: All schemes work better with a mix of units to provide a variety of 'lifestyles' in an area, which helps to prevent areas being 'empty' during the working day, and potentially allowing crimes to occur in these quiet times.

- Continuous built frontages make most effective use of space, therefore dwellings will normally be in terraces or in flatted buildings.
- Some parking will be provided on-street, in specially designed parking bays.
- Parking standards lower than the maximum may be required.
- Dwellings are normally sited at the back edge of the pavement, or with very small front gardens.
- 2-4 storey buildings are generally appropriate but this will depend on the immediate local context.
- Not all dwellings will be expected to have significant private amenity space (see below).

Amenity Space

Where the scheme is predominantly made up of houses, private amenity space should be provided in rear gardens. There is no guideline as to size, but rear to rear privacy criteria must be observed. If an adjacent dwelling has a long back garden, a short



rear garden in the new dwelling may still achieve the same privacy. As a minimum, the garden must allow for two people to sit out in

reasonable privacy and daylight, and be of suitable gradient and orientation. As with other types of residential development it is the quality of space rather than the quantity that is important. With flats every effort should be made to give units private amenity space with patios, balconies or verandas or small gardens for ground floor units.

Design Quality

In order to bring about the urban renaissance required for urban areas, it is not sufficient to introduce higher density development without the commensurate improvement in design quality to ensure that urban areas remain or become attractive places to live.

6. Design Guidelines for 'Car Free' Residential Development

In some circumstances it may be appropriate to consider 'car free' housing. This type of development has already been permitted in the District at Brook Street Halls of Residence, in High Wycombe. The development provides accommodation for students, with only operational parking and parking for the disabled.

Car free housing will normally only be appropriate in certain circumstances:

- Where the District Council can be satisfied that problems of displaced parking will not arise, or can be controlled;
- Close to or within town centres, where access to facilities can be by foot or cycle, and public transport is easily available (usually in accessibility zone 1); and
- Specialist institutional accommodation, for example, for students/hospital workers when located close to the primary destination, ie, college or hospital.

Type of Dwellings

Smaller households are more likely to be 'car free', and this should be reflected in the mix of dwelling size and type, which is proposed. 'Car free' housing will not be appropriate where accessibility by alternative means of transport would be poor.

'Car free' housing does not literally mean free of cars. There will be some access for cars, service and emergency vehicles (service vehicles include waste disposal vehicles and removal vehicles). Access for such vehicles should be accommodated in such a way as not to undermine the traffic-free character of the development.

Residents of 'car free' zones will generally be required to enter legal covenants (imposed as part of planning consent), on purchase or tenancy of their dwelling regarding car ownership and parking in the vicinity of the development.

Amenity Space

'Car free' developments present the opportunity for exciting townscape that can use the space previously allocated to the car for high quality landscape settings.

No specific guideline is recommended, apart from the requirement for private sitting out space either in the form of balconies/patios or verandas for each dwelling. This should be big enough to allow two people to sit out

in sufficient privacy and daylight, and be of suitable gradient and orientation and directly accessible from within the dwelling (except where the dwelling is not the main residence i.e. student/hospital accommodation).

7. Design Guidelines for the Countryside, including the AONB and Green Belt

Development in the countryside, and particularly in the Green Belt and AONB, is strictly controlled under the policies contained in chapters 8, 9 and 10 of this Local Plan. These policies also set out those forms of development which may be acceptable in these locations, and it is to these that the following guidelines apply (they should be read in conjunction with the general guidance set out in Section 3 of this Appendix). In particular regard should be had to Policies GB5, GB6, L1, L2 and L3 and to the Chilterns Building Design Guide.

General principles that apply to residential development throughout the countryside are set out below (additional considerations relating to development in Green Belt or AONB locations follow):

- 1) Development should not harm the open appearance of the countryside. It should be sited and designed to blend with the landscape. In order to achieve this, there will need to be sufficient space within plots between buildings to allow planting to assist with screening.
- 2) Where replacement dwellings are acceptable, they need not necessarily occupy the footprint of the previous dwelling, but should be sited where they would best respect the principles set out in (1), above, and should usually seek to reflect the dominant local built form.
- 3) The scale, bulk and massing of development should respect the open and rural character of its setting. Traditional countryside buildings offer the best solution; these are generally simple in form, which helps to minimise their visual impact. They normally include roofs that are pitched with a low eaves line; the span of the building will be narrow so that the resultant building is not bulky; and large buildings are broken down into small component parts.
- 4) Care should be taken with the choice of materials: modern and synthetic materials are usually incongruous in a countryside setting, whereas natural and traditional materials weather well and blend into the landscape.
- 5) Development should not be dominated by highways or parked cars. Where possible, minimum highway standards should apply, and car parking, whether open or covered, should not dominate the openness of plots.
- 6) Care must be taken with conversions and new building to avoid urbanisation of the countryside. This involves paying attention to the details of external appearance, as well as to the provision of services to the building. By way of example, large areas of glazing will not generally be acceptable, as the reflective surfaces dominate the building, and are visually intrusive.

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- 7) Boundaries, enclosure and entrances are an important part of the landscape character, they should be sympathetic to the rural surroundings.

Additional considerations apply to certain parts of the countryside:

- 1) In the Green Belt, the size of new residential development, including extensions, is controlled by Policies GB5 and GB6. Where development is permitted, of whatever size, the primary design consideration is that it must not affect the openness of the Green Belt by causing visual harm or intrusion.
- 2) The AONB is designated for its intrinsic landscape qualities. Development within the AONB must therefore respect the dominant landscape form. New development is controlled by Policy L1. Additional advice on appropriate development within the AONB is contained in the Chilterns Building Design Guide, produced by the Chilterns Conference which has been approved by the Council as supplementary planning guidance. This identifies settlement types within the AONB, and the detailed design considerations applying to traditional dwellings, as well as advice on appropriate materials. These principles should be respected if development is to be successfully integrated with the local landscape context.