

# Building a House in Rural Kerry



## DESIGN GUIDELINES



KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL | COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHIARRAÍ









# Contents.



## FIRST EDITION

Prepared by The Planning Department,  
Kerry County Council,  
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Cover: Left image, courtesy of Simon J. Kelly & Partners Architects,  
bottom centre image, courtesy of Ros Kavanagh.

*Please Note - This booklet is intended as a guide only in relation to rural house design. The examples in this booklet are illustrative only. They are a response to their own unique environment and may not be transferable. This guide does not deal with rural settlement policies or other issues such as road safety and public health. Please consult the County Development Plan for guidance on these topics.*

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Our people and our landscape are part of what makes Kerry unique.  
Let us together build, live and work in harmony with that landscape.



# Introduction.

## Building a House in Rural Kerry - Design Guidelines

These guidelines have been prepared to assist in the preparation of a planning application for a rural dwelling.

**The theme of this document is integration.** This will come from an understanding of the landscape and result in an appropriate response through siting and design.

These guidelines highlight the importance of site selection, integration and sensitive design when building in the Kerry rural countryside. The guidelines outline in a step-by-step format the issues all potential applicants, architects and planning agents should consider when preparing a planning application.

There are at present approximately 34,000 dwellings constructed in the rural countryside of County Kerry out of a total Housing Stock in the County of 66,000 (CSO figures 2006).

It is estimated that approximately 50% of the population of the County live in rural areas and the pressure continues on the Planning Authority to permit more rural houses.

The difficulty for the Planning Authority is that the rural landscape can only accommodate a certain number of such houses before irreparable and irreversible damage is done primarily to the landscape and the water sources.

After its people, the landscape and water quality are arguably the most precious assets we have and both must be protected for the benefit of present and future generations.

It is the landscape of Kerry that has formed us both mentally and physically as 'Kerry People' for generations past and will also form future generations. There is a great responsibility on us, the present generation, to preserve this asset intact and unspoilt for future generations. Our landscape constitutes one of our greatest economic assets.

It is clearly evident from travelling around the County that significant damage has already been done to the landscape in particular areas due to a failure to integrate development, mainly one-off houses, into what is often a barren and exposed landscape. This has been widely commented upon by tourists who overall still see our countryside as beautiful and spectacular. We should heed the warning and address the integration issue going forward.





# Step 1

Location.



# Location.

Before you focus on the type of house you wish to build and decide on the site you wish to build on, you must first have an understanding of the landscape.

Analyse the character, value and sensitivity of the landscape you wish to build on. This should involve an analysis of any impact the house may have on the landscape, not just in terms of its visual impact but also practical and economic considerations such as services; water, electricity, telephone and proximity to schools, shops and other public conveniences.



For the purpose of this document, the wide ranging landscapes of County Kerry have been simplified into the following four regions:

- Lowland farmland areas
- Upland areas
- Rural environs of towns and villages
- Coastal open areas

*Each landscape area will require a different response to the local characteristics and settlement patterns so as to integrate new development.*



## Lowland farmland areas.

These landscape areas are mainly characterised by low-lying undulating farmland where naturally occurring vegetation exists. This vegetation offers great opportunities to enhance the location and choice of dwelling in the countryside.

In some lowland areas however vegetation can be quite sparse and houses are often visible from a wide area. This should be considered when choosing a location in which to build, as house choice will be limited and additional landscaping required. Informal development patterns reflective of traditional farm holdings assimilate best into lowland farmland areas. Locating a dwelling house in these areas is best achieved by utilising the natural contours of the land. The natural screening that exists will integrate the dwelling into the landscape and shelter the dwelling from harsh weather conditions thereby minimising heating costs and providing natural privacy for the home owner.

*Right: Photo of lowland area with sparse vegetation where dwellings can be difficult to integrate and are often visible from a wide area.*



*Above: This picture shows a lowland farmland area where naturally occurring vegetation exists. Examine the picture above and identify where the existing hedgerows/field boundaries have been used to influence the location and siting of dwellings successfully into the landscape.*



## Upland areas.

These landscape areas are often characterised by open and exposed hillside and mountainous terrain usually consisting of areas of high amenity value.

Maintaining the natural beauty of such areas is of critical importance in deciding upon the location and design of new buildings. The traditional settlement patterns in these areas consisted of informal compact cluster type settlements incorporating simple architecture particular to the region, which is referred to as 'vernacular architecture'. Vernacular architecture is a term used to describe methods of construction which use locally available materials and traditions to address local needs. Vernacular architecture tends to evolve over time to reflect the environmental, cultural and historical context in which it exists. Future development in these landscapes is best achieved by locating development reflective of the traditional vernacular style within or directly adjacent to such settlements in an informal fashion.

*Right: Exposed mountainous area- informal compact cluster type settlement - thus maintaining the rural character of the area.*



*Above: Exposed hillside area with scattered development which has impacted on the rural character of the area.*



## Rural environs of towns and villages.

These landscape areas are characterised by their proximity to nearby urban settlements.

The rapid urbanisation of the countryside is very evident in these areas due to development pressure from the nearby urban areas. The ability of this landscape to absorb future development is quite limited due to the threat of water pollution, loss of rural character and impact on the capacity of the road network. The use of urban designs and ribbon type patterns of development should be avoided in these areas.

*Right: Ribbon type patterns of development on the edge of a town.*



*Above: View of rural area under intense development pressure from the nearby urban centre.*



## Coastal open areas.

These landscape areas are quite varied from dramatic cliffs tops to sandy beaches and from undulating sand dunes to flat coastal plains.

They are all characterised by very open and exposed lands with little or no vegetation. It can be very difficult to integrate, shelter and consequently heat a dwelling in this type of landscape. Coastal areas are particularly vulnerable to intrusive development.

Development in coastal locations is best achieved through locating development adjacent to existing settlements and through the use of vernacular architecture or contemporary interpretation of vernacular architecture which is reflective of the rugged exposed environment.

*Right: Scattered housing development on open exposed coastal landscape.*



*Above: An open exposed coastal landscape - difficult to integrate dwellings.*



Once an understanding of the landscape has been gained the next step is to establish if the landscape has any special protection or designation attached to it.

To do this you should consult the current *Kerry County Development Plan and relevant Local Area Plans*. The County Plan identifies and protects landscapes that are less able to absorb development without experiencing a significant impact upon their character, integrity and uniformity. You should be aware if any of the following designations apply to your site:

- Rural Prime Special Amenity
- Rural Secondary Special Amenity
- Protected Views and Prospects

A site located within any of the above designated areas is considered visually very sensitive and will require careful consideration to successfully address siting and design issues to ensure integration into the landscape.

As well as the above designations, the applicant should also be aware that County Kerry has many areas designated or proposed for environmental protection, i.e. *Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)*, *Special Protection Areas (SPA)* and *Natural Heritage Areas (NHA)*. There are approx. 9,000 archaeological sites listed as Recorded Monuments for protection. You should consult *The Kerry County Development Plan*, where maps of such areas are contained. The Planning Authority will also be happy to give you guidance on any of the above or view on line at: [www.kerrycoco.ie](http://www.kerrycoco.ie).

**It is important to consider the issues highlighted above, prior to selecting a site and commissioning plans for your house.**

Arrange a pre-planning consultation with the Planning Authority to assess whether the site you are considering is affected by the above scenic designations or other planning policy. Your architect/planning agent should also be in possession of this information.





# Step 2

## Siting & Integration.



# Siting & Integration.

Once you have an understanding of the type of landscape in which you wish to build and have consulted the County Development Plan and/or relevant Local Area Plan, you should proceed to select your application site very carefully.

## Aim for integration into the landscape

Consider the following points carefully.

## Choose a sheltered site.

Seek out sheltered sites with mature screening. An analysis of your site should always highlight the vantage points from where your proposed dwelling may be seen. When considering the layout of your site, you must consider these viewpoints carefully and adjust the location of your dwelling on the site to achieve maximum integration.

In general tucking the building in close proximity to natural shelters such as trees and ditches will have the benefit of assimilating the building into the landscape thus reducing the visual impact of it on the landscape. Greater choice of house design will also be allowed on more sheltered, well screened sites. The presence of trees and ditches will also provide shelter and enhance the privacy of your site from adjoining properties.

Another important reason to seek out shelter is that a house that is exposed to winds will incur significant heat losses in winter time, resulting in higher energy costs for you. Traditionally the gable of the house faced the wind, i.e. southwesterly to reduce wind exposure.



*Tucking a building close to natural shelters will reduce the visual impact on the landscape*





*Original site with existing hedgerows and natural boundaries*



*These two pictures illustrate an acceptable siting of the dwelling giving both privacy and shelter to the house, while respecting the natural hedgerows and landscape characteristics*



*New house is sited centrally, natural hedgerows are removed*



*Appropriate siting of houses using natural hedgerows and trees.*



## Avoid elevated and exposed locations.

Siting a dwelling house on low-lying lands embracing the contours and folds of the land will allow for successful integration of the dwelling into the landscape.

Take note of how visible the site is from the surrounding area;

**The less visible the site - the more integration will be achieved - the greater likelihood of obtaining planning permission.**



*The dwellings have utilised the natural contours of the land and natural screening to integrate into the rural landscape.*



*Avoid exposed sites which lack shelter.*

Low-lying lands will also provide natural shelter and privacy for the dwelling and its curtilage, reduce heat loss and allow for greater house design choice. The occupants of a dwelling in such a location can also feel content in the knowledge that they are maintaining the rural character of the area for future generations to enjoy.



**Avoid breaking the skyline or locating between the road and areas of natural beauty such as the sea, lakes and rivers.**



*The image above shows ribbon development impacting on the skyline.*



*Locating between the road and the sea or on the shore of a lake can interfere with scenic views.*





# Topography.

## Work with the contours of the site.

A detailed contour survey and site analysis is essential. The contours of the site should influence the design of your house. In general any proposal should run with the slope to provide a design that integrates with the site.

Care should be taken to avoid extreme intervention on a site, such as excessive cutting of a hillside. If the ground is weakened, it may result in land slippage and excessive flooding on site.

Utilizing a narrow plan house or stepped ground levels will minimise the need for excessive excavations. Individual accommodation spaces can be provided in a sensitive manner to the site contours.



*Working with the contours of the land can achieve successful integration of a dwelling*



*Trunking up a site to create a platform will make the dwelling house more conspicuous and more exposed to adverse weather conditions.*



*Excessive excavation creates permanent scarring of an upland area, this can lead to long term problems with land slippage, possible flooding and loss of daylight.*



## Avoid formal patterns of development.

Traditionally dwellings were sited on the land in an informal manner blending into the landscape and adding to the character and attractiveness of the landscape.

Much thought would generally have been put into the siting of a dwelling in terms of shelter and function. More recent developments have tended to adopt a more formal and urban approach to siting with harsh rigid lines, ribbon type development, expanses of manicured lawns with non native planting and a mis-match of roadside boundary treatments. These are all alien to the rural Kerry countryside and sadly detracting from our countryside.



*A mis-match of roadside boundary*



*Ribbon development*

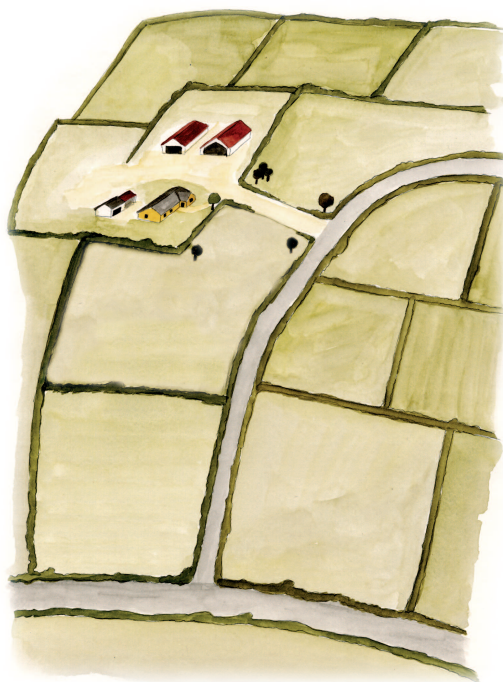


*The image above shows the extent of the original settlement (highlighted in circle) reflective of typical compact informal clusters. More recent development has tended towards formal ribbon type development extending outwards along the principal approach roads and impacting negatively on the rural character of the area.*

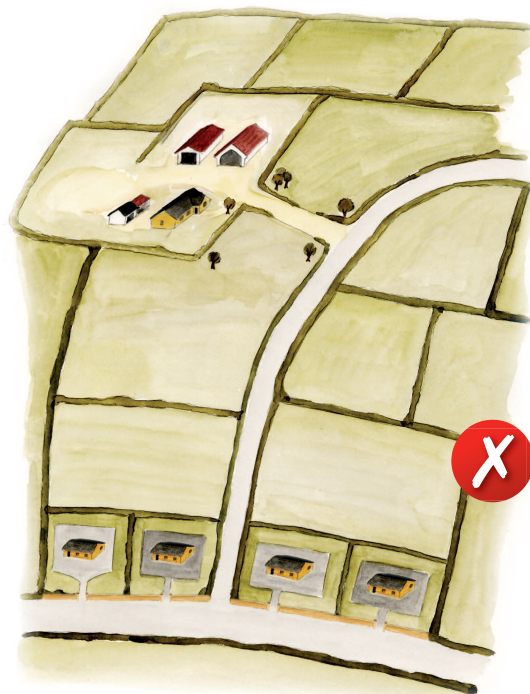


Don't assume that you have to position your house parallel to the public road.

*In fact avoiding a rigid building line, particularly where ribbon development is already in existence, can result in greater integration. This pattern reflects the traditional characteristics of siting a rural dwelling, where the position of the dwelling on the site was selected to avoid the prevailing winds and to maximise solar gain.*



*This image shows a typical farm holding with farmhouse and farm buildings, set back from the public road. The greater setback from the public road can assist in reducing the visual impact from a wider area.*



*This image shows development of typical half-acre plots along the public road leading to ribbon development over time. This formal pattern of development incorporates rigid building lines and the removal of roadside boundaries, leading to the undesirable suburbanisation of the rural countryside.*



*This image shows an appropriate response. An informal pattern of development, set back from the public road using an existing vehicular entrance and retaining field boundaries, thereby maintaining the rural character of the area.*



## Residential amenities.

Ensure the location of your dwelling house on your chosen site does not impact negatively on the residential amenities of dwellings in the vicinity. Care should be taken to ensure no overlooking or interference with the privacy of existing and permitted development in the area.



*New dwelling sited left in picture has had regard to the height, scale and siting of the existing traditional single storey dwelling.*



*The location of a two storey dwelling beside an established single storey can result in over looking, interfere with privacy and result in the devaluation of property. It will also look out of place in the wider rural landscape.*



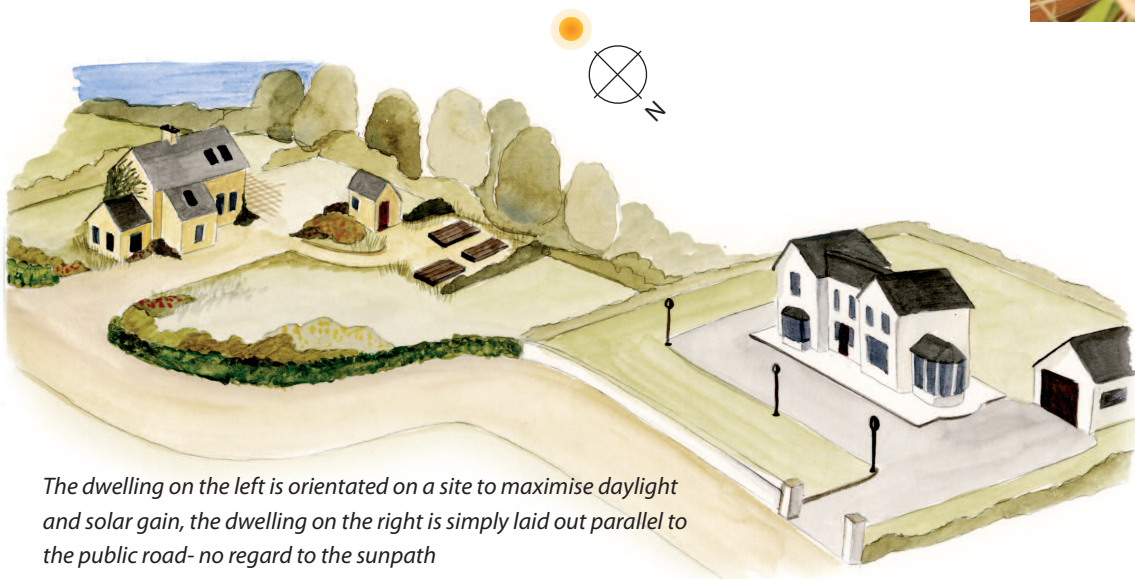
*This illustration shows an acceptable solution where a single storey dwelling with attic development (positioned left) can be considered in this case where ground levels are lower on the new site.*



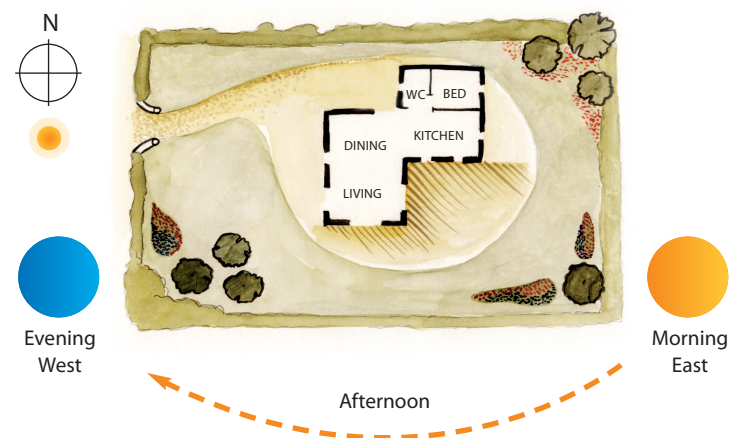
## Capture the sun.

When considering available sites on a landholding, it is best to seek a site with a north-south aspect, which maximises solar gain and daylight.

In order to enhance the energy performance of your building you should orientate your house within 15 degrees of due south. This action alone will achieve significant savings for you in the long term. To maximise the amenity value of your home and to capture as much natural sunlight for warmth and light in living spaces - you must pay attention to the sun path. Use the daily path of the sun to determine which rooms will get the sunlight at a particular time of day. Locating the rear of your house to face south will allow for larger glazing areas to achieve passive solar energy and greater daylight while maintaining privacy and achieving a better solid to void ratio on the front elevation.



*The dwelling on the left is orientated on a site to maximise daylight and solar gain, the dwelling on the right is simply laid out parallel to the public road- no regard to the sunpath*



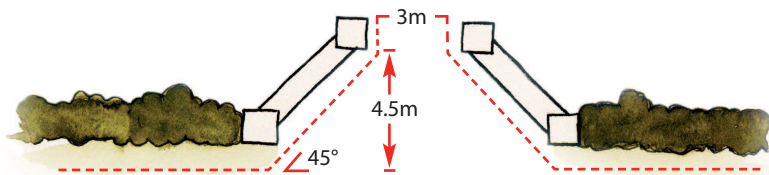
*Typical sunpath diagram*



## Review access onto a public road and sight distances.

Utilise existing entrances if appropriate, or opt for the creation of a safe access point with minimal roadside boundary interruption.

Ensure adequate sight distances are available for the ambient traffic speed on the road and locate the access point to maximize the sight distances. Removal of the entire roadside hedgerow to accommodate a new site entrance can be seriously detrimental to the rural character of the area.



*Basic Entrance Layout Requirements*



*Avoid locating your entrance on or near bends*

The retention of the natural roadside boundary can provide many opportunities for further integration of the dwelling house into the landscape, greater house design choice, greater privacy and shelter and maintaining the flora and fauna and visual character of the rural landscape.



*Natural roadside boundary retained*



## Review soil conditions.

Ensure the site is suitable for waste water treatment before commissioning detailed drawings.

You are advised to engage the services of a suitably qualified person from the Local Authority's approved list of site assessors to carry out the required site assessment.

This site assessment shall be carried out in accordance with the *EPA Wastewater Treatment Manual - Treatment Systems for Single Houses*.

If the site is deemed unsuitable for the treatment of domestic effluent it will be necessary to choose an alternative site.



### INDICATORS OF GOOD SOIL CONDITIONS



Thistle



Bracken



ragwort



### INDICATORS OF POOR SOIL CONDITIONS



Alder



Iris



Rushes



## Landscaping.

Consider at an early stage the layout of and requirements for the open space area that will surround your new dwelling.

The trend in recent years for the suburban style of expansive areas of manicured lawn and hard-surfaced car-parking areas to the front of the dwelling is not a traditional feature of our landscape and should be avoided. This type of layout requires a lot of maintenance, provides for little privacy or habitats for wildlife. Retain existing natural features, such as areas of wildflower meadows and small woodland areas.

Appropriate planting of native species and the use of suitable earth mounding at strategic vantage points identified may be necessary depending on the results of the site analysis. The clustering of native Irish broad leafed trees appropriate to the area should be carefully considered prior to final design stage. Look at the trees / hedgerows which were traditionally planted in the area as these are generally native and have demonstrated that they can survive in the area. The provision of fruit trees and shrubs is also a good idea. It may be appropriate to set aside part of your overall site for a vegetable patch, wildflower meadow or small woodland area.

***Ambitious landscaping proposals will not compensate for a poorly selected site and a poor standard of design.***

Refer to Appendix 1 for a guide to native plant species.



*Unsuccessful integration - existing field/road side boundaries removed and replaced with masonry block wall and timber fencing, entrance centrally located with large hard surfaced area surrounding dwelling, large open manicured suburban type lawn. No additional landscaping carried out.*



*Successful integration- existing roadside and boundary screening retained and entrance off set. Parking to rear, minimum hard-surfaced area to front of dwelling. Wild meadow and veggie patch introduced into site. Additional appropriate native planting carried out at strategic locations to screen dwelling further.*



## The onus is on the applicant to satisfy the Planning Authority that the most appropriate location and site have been chosen from the available landholding.

Before you commission an architect to draw up plans for a house, you must ensure that you have selected the most suitable location and site on the available landholding. You should cross reference the site selected with the issues highlighted above and satisfy yourself in relation to suitability of the site.

If any of the negative issues are highlighted in relation to an examination of your site, then an alternative site if available, must be considered at an early stage.

If you are satisfied that the site selected meets the criteria for development outlined in Steps 1 and 2 then proceed to Step 3 on Boundary Treatment and Vehicular Entrance.





# Step 3

Boundary treatment and vehicular entrance.



# Boundary treatment and vehicular entrance.

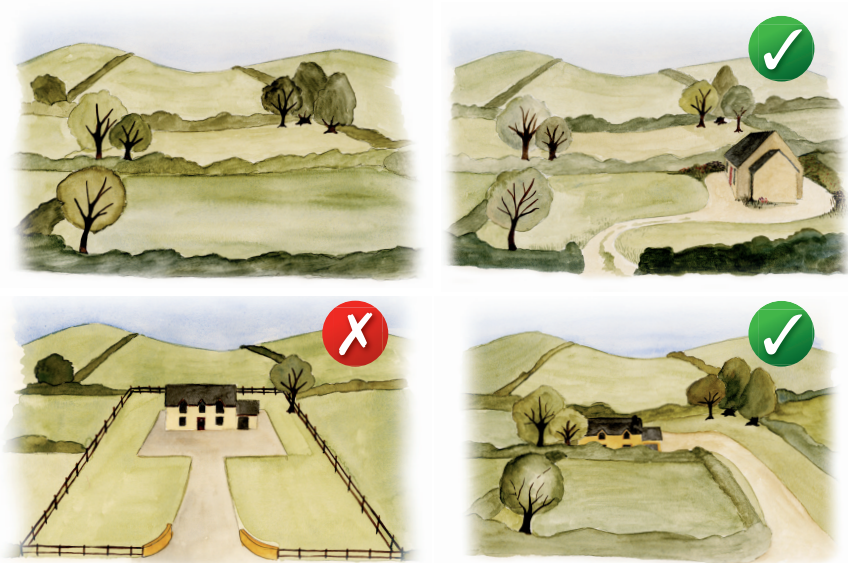
An analysis of the existing site boundaries is also a very important element to consider in the selection of a site and can affect how well your dwelling house will integrate into the surrounding rural area.

In particular the removal of roadside boundaries to facilitate a vehicular entrance and the construction of a new roadside boundary at a setback position can have a significant adverse impact on the rural character of an area and it can significantly increase the visual impact of your dwelling house on the rural landscape.

Applicants have in the past been given a wide choice of materials to construct the front boundary fence, including timber fencing with hedging, concrete block, stone and sod and stone. The choice permitted, range in styles and quality available has however lead to confusion as to what is the most appropriate treatment for a new front boundary fence.

In some cases the treatment of new boundaries and entrances appears particularly insensitive and suburban with the use of crazy paving type stone cladding instead of dry stonewalls, elaborate gate posts and gates and the planting of non- indigenous hedge species.

One of the best ways to successfully integrate your new dwelling into the landscape is to retain existing field boundaries and in particular the front boundary ditch, hedge or stone walls. The retention of the front ditch, if properly maintained, is more cost effective than any alternative boundary treatment.



Above: Retaining roadside and existing field boundaries can help integrate your dwelling into the rural landscape.



Above: Four examples of inappropriate treatment of roadside boundary.



Where existing, the front boundary ditch, hedge or stone walls should be retained and only removed in part to facilitate the construction of a new vehicular entrance or to provide adequate sight lines. (Please refer to the County Development Plan for guidance on sight lines). In certain cases, where part of the ditch, hedge or stone wall needs to be removed to facilitate adequate sight lines, it should always be re-positioned and reinstated on site at the appropriate set back position. This can be done very effectively and it maintains the rural character of an area.

The existing ditch, hedge or stone wall should be strengthened or repaired where required. Wing walls should be constructed in sod and stone or natural stone only. The type of materials to be used for the construction of lateral boundaries should also be considered at an early stage. Where existing, field boundaries should be retained. If it is necessary to construct new lateral boundaries, always match the materials used on the front roadside boundary. The use of ranch style timber post and fencing and the planting of non-indigenous hedging and the construction of masonry block walls should always be avoided in a rural setting.

The location of the vehicular entrance, driveway and associated car-parking areas should be sensitively and discretely sited using existing contours to avoid scarring of the landscape. A formal rigid pattern, where the driveway dissects the site midway with an expanse of car-parking to the front of the house should be avoided.

The following should be adhered to:

- The location of the entrance and driveway should be off set from the location of the dwelling, typically sited at either side of the site (assuming suitable sight distances), thereby retaining roadside boundary in front of the dwelling and achieving further integration of the dwelling. The driveway should follow an informal route from the entrance into the site along one side, towards the rear of the dwelling, using existing contours of the site where possible.
- The main car-parking area should be located to the rear of the dwelling or away from view of the public road.
- The extensive use of hard surface areas should be avoided and gravel finishes should be considered on suitably graded driveways instead.



*Above: Four examples of appropriate treatment of roadside boundary.*



# Step 4

## Design.





# Design.

Achieving a suitable design of a dwelling house for a particular site requires a significant amount of skill in order to get the form, scale and proportions right.

The Planning Authority strongly recommends the use of suitably qualified architects/designers to achieve a successful design for a particular site. The overall design of a dwelling house will be determined by the:

- **Location and siting on the landscape**
- **Level of existing screening on the site**
- **The traditional rural vernacular characteristics of the area**
- **Climatic conditions of the area in terms of orientation, layout and design detailing.**

Study the character and physical attributes of the landscape and the form of traditional buildings in the area. The landscape character features should be retained and used to influence the design of the house. Consider whether your proposal will be compatible with the surrounding landscape and existing buildings.

*All potential applicants and architects/designers should note that if the correct location and siting is not achieved, a well designed building accompanied by ambitious landscaping proposals, is unlikely to be successful.*

The key to successful design is to design your dwelling to suit your site. Don't just copy a neighbours or friends design as it may not be suitable for your site, or in the long term may not really suit your own needs. In addition there are many examples of inappropriate house design in the rural area which should not be replicated. In the assessment of applications, the same design issue - that of repetitive house designs on unsuitable sites arises again and again. This results in requests for amended drawings to be prepared causing significant delays and increased cost for the applicant. This can be avoided when greater attention is given to selecting the most suitable site, designing the dwelling to suit the application site and not trying to retro fit a certain house design seen elsewhere into your site.

**The key thing to remember when designing your house is - Keep it simple.**



Simplicity is the key. Such an approach will stand the test of time. A simple and robust design is something that has in the past worked and will continue to work well and define our rural heritage for generations to come. Fussy and complicated detailing should be avoided in order to achieve a successful planning application and avoid a 'clumsy' looking design. A simple design does not mean that you will be prevented from individualising your dwelling, or designing your house to suit your lifestyle.

A contemporary interpretation of the traditional design is encouraged on suitable sites at appropriate locations. Successful contemporary designs generally reflect the best principles of traditional vernacular architecture. For example, the Barn House - is a typical vernacular structure that can integrate successfully into the rural countryside. This structure provides numerous opportunities for renovation and contemporary extension thereto for habitation purposes and can also provide inspiration for new build in the rural environment.



*Traditional barn house*



*Above: Three examples of successful contemporary designs reflecting the best principles of traditional vernacular architecture.*



## Get the form/shape right.

One of the first design concepts to consider is what shape/form your dwelling will take. The characteristics of your site should significantly influence this.

The typical characteristics of appropriate form for a rural context include:

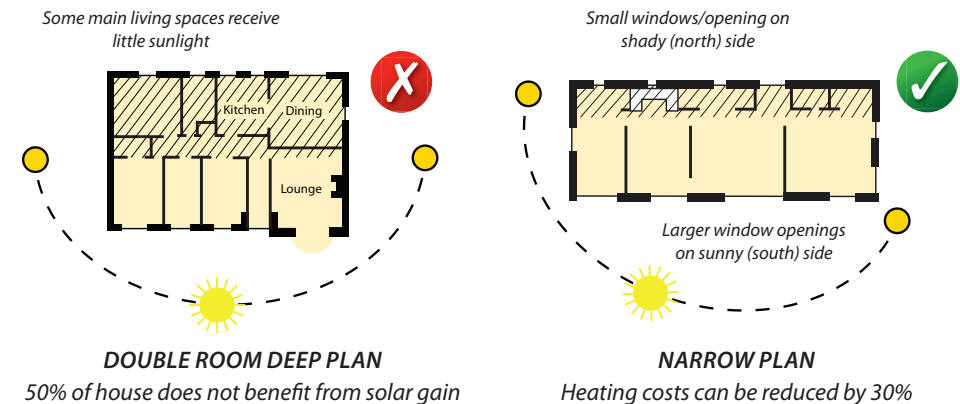
1. Simplicity/regularity of shape
2. Scale determined by site context
3. Break down bulk and scale
4. Strong robust and well-defined elevations with minimal protrusions.

A modern rural type dwelling should incorporate all of the above characteristics.

In recent years there has been a trend towards the 'big block house', i.e. deep plan and top heavy forms which look out of place in the rural landscape. It can be quite a challenge to come up with an acceptable two room deep house type, which doesn't look bulky or out of scale and with this shape of house, you will generally have to decide which of your rooms will get the sun or not. This is where the **traditional narrow plan form** or modern take on the **traditional farmyard cluster** can be highly successful. The Planning Authority suggests that where possible the applicant should consider the advantages of these forms for your new dwelling. Both can be reworked to suit today's modern living needs, often allowing for greater flexibility in design and potential future extensions.

If a two room deep dwelling is proposed, it will require the design of well proportioned traditional gables, which will allow for overall appropriate massing to be achieved.

In exposed locations a low almost hidden form is appropriate, located to maximise shelter among the folds of the landscape. L or U shaped forms with clustered outbuildings positioned to provide a sheltered micro climate around the dwelling can work well.



- **Narrow Plan House** - one room deep taking on a linear format which can be stepped and extended lengthways and extended upwards to form a single storey with attic style, 1 ½ storey or two storey design thereby achieving a larger floor area if so required. The narrow plan house can benefit from 100% solar gain and natural light which will provide for more functional rooms/spaces within and also substantially decrease heating costs.



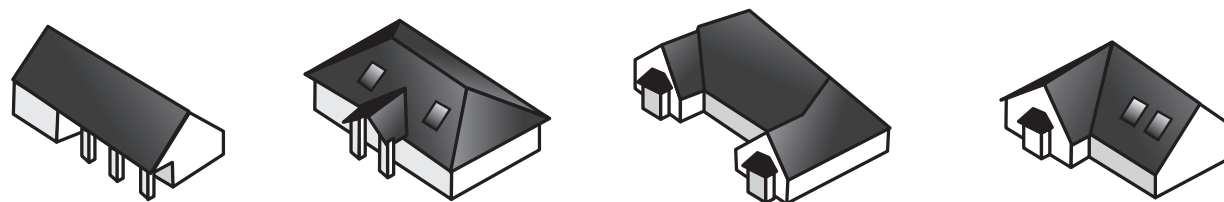
- **The Farm Yard** - with a tight knit arrangement of farmhouse, barns and outbuildings generally in a courtyard scenario. This provides an opportunity for contemporary interpretation and will aid in the design of a larger house on an appropriate size site by means of breaking up the mass and bulk of the structure.



## Single Storey Forms

### AVOID:

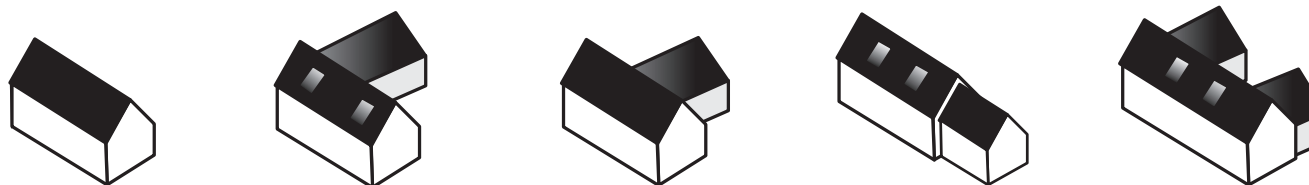
High Eaves  
Wide Gables  
Bulky and Low Level  
Fussy Detail



## Single Storey Forms

### RETAIN:

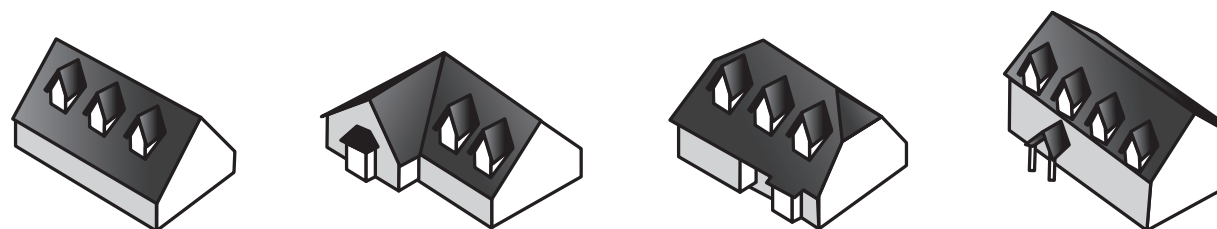
Modest Scale  
Low Eaves  
Vertical emphasis to gables  
Roof Pitch 35° - 45°  
Narrow Plan



## Dormer Forms

### AVOID:

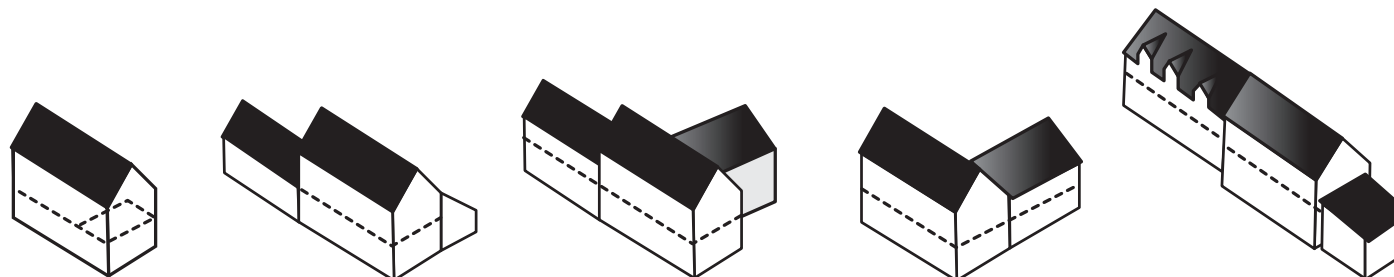
High Eaves  
Wide Gables  
Bulky and Low Level  
Fussy Detail



## Two Storey/Storey & Half

### RETAIN:

Modest Scale  
Low Eaves  
Vertical emphasis to gables  
Roof Pitch 35° - 45°  
Narrow Plan





# Massing.

Massing is about how you bring together the main components of a house and how these components relate to each other and the site.

The bulk, scale and height of a structure will determine if correct massing has been achieved. Successful massing is realised by avoiding deep plans, squat shapes and excessive heights and opting for more narrow plan, higher pitch 'broken-up' structures which will integrate into the rural countryside and result in a successful planning application.

There is a perception that a 'big and bulky type' house is the only way to achieve a larger dwelling house. This is not the case.

A greater floor area can be accommodated in a number of ways on a suitable site by means of incorporating the narrow plan and breaking up the structure into different components; stepped buildings, the L-plan and the traditional farmyard set up incorporating a courtyard are ways to achieving this. This approach offers much flexibility in overall design and allows for further straight forward expansion at a later date if so required. Utilising such massing techniques will achieve greater solar gain with narrow plan houses offering dual aspect rooms, sun traps and more interesting spaces. The end result will be an appropriate house design that suits the needs of the applicant and assimilates into the surrounding landscape.



*Big bulky type house = inappropriate massing*



*Above: Four examples indicating that a greater floor area of building is achieved through breaking up the main components of the structure.*



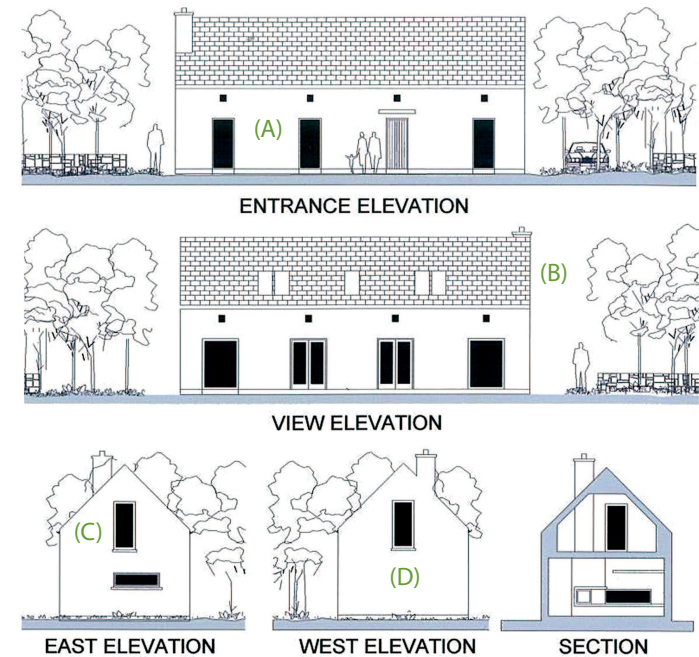
# Proportions.

Getting the proportions of the build right is a key factor in good design.

The overall form of the structure will relate to the roof shape, which will relate to the ratio of wall to window space, which in turn will relate to size and shape of windows and doors. Achieving a connectivity and flow between these component parts of the design will result in a strong, robust dwelling with an overall theme. If the proportions work well, the structure as a whole will integrate more successfully into the landscape.

## HOW TO GET THE PROPORTIONS RIGHT:

- Incorporate horizontal proportioned walls (A)
- Incorporate horizontal roof scape (B)
- Roof pitches generally 35 - 45 degrees (C)
- Incorporate vertical emphasis to gables, chimneys, windows and doors (D)



11a



Above: Three examples of proportions working well together.



## Design elements.



Inappropriate dormer



Dormer alternative

Alternative



Bulky gable profile



Solid gable profile

Alternative



Suburban door



Solid timber door

Alternative



Suburban type pvc door and window



Timber windows displaying vertical emphasis

Alternative



Shallow pitched roof, randomly placed chimneys

Alternative



Strong robust chimneys, uninterrupted consistently pitched roof



## Scale and height.

The scale of a dwelling house is determined in relation to its surroundings, the type of landscape and the siting within such a landscape.

It is necessary for the house designer to assess and study the type of landscape the site is located in and the location of the house within the site. A different scale of dwelling house will be appropriate for differing type of landscapes. The traditional estate house provides a good example of how a large house can be successfully assimilated into a particular landscape. Mature screening prevailed, dwelling was set back substantially from the adjoining roadway and located amongst natural screening, roadside and field boundaries were retained.

In particular, field boundaries, existing natural screening, topography and vernacular architecture in the area will all play a role in determining the appropriate scale of dwelling for the site.



*The scale and height of the single storey dwellings relate successfully to the landscape. The two storey dwelling fails to integrate into this type of landscape.*



Consider the following before deciding on the scale and height of the dwelling:

- The size of the dwelling should relate to the size of the site.  
A larger dwelling house will require a larger site with extensive screening.
- Utilize the natural contours and folds of the land to assimilate the dwelling into the landscape and act as a backdrop.
- Take note of existing house type in the area. Where mainly single storey type dwellings dominate, opt for similar scale. A large house beside a small house can look out of place and can have a negative impact on the privacy and light of the smaller dwelling.
- Utilize existing natural screening on site. Mature trees will provide an appropriate setting for a higher scale dwelling.
- More low-lying lands should be opted for in site selection. Avoid breaking the skyline and elevated exposed locations.
- Employing a narrow plan form with suitable massing will reduce the bulk and height.



Above: Four examples where the scale and height of dwellings are in harmony with surrounding landscape.



## Energy efficiency and environmental sustainability.

With the increasing cost of energy and issues of sustainability at the top of the agenda, energy efficiency and environmental sustainability should also be considered at the initial design stage.

Consider the following:

- Take into account the sun-path, discuss this issue with your architect. A site with a north-south orientation is best in terms of the potential to maximize daylight and solar gain.
- A compact building form of minimum surface-to-volume ratio is best for reducing heat loss.
- Keep window openings on the north elevation to a minimum. Larger openings should be kept for the south elevation.
- A rectangular building with one of the longer facades facing south can allow for increased passive solar heating, day lighting and natural ventilation. As well as reducing energy costs, sunny south facing rooms have a higher amenity value.
- Projections such as bay and dormer windows should be kept to a minimum since by increasing the surface to volume ratio of the building they will increase heat loss. In addition it can be more difficult to insulate these types of projections.
- Consider renovation/repair of existing structures in the rural countryside before considering a new build.
- Any demolition materials should be reused on site where appropriate.
- Incorporate passive solar design.
- Use local and natural materials.
- Use existing natural vegetation to create shelter belts, therefore minimising the potential for heat loss.





The use of solar panels, domestic wind turbines, hydro power, biomass, heat pumps, high performance insulation and water conservation will all save on energy and heating costs with the added benefits to the environment. Consider installing rain water harvesters/collectors (even if only to be used for toilets) as this may significantly reduce running electricity costs if not on public mains.

One of the simplest and cost effective ways however to reduce your energy bills is to select a low-lying, well screened site and to design your house to suit the character of the site which must include an examination of the orientation of the site. Proposals to install expensive energy efficient technologies are counterproductive if your site is elevated, open and exposed to winds

Before you design your dwelling and again before you submit your application for planning permission, take time to consider how well your proposal successfully addresses the issues raised above in terms of shape/form, scale and height, massing and proportions. Discuss these issues with your architect and be satisfied that the drawings prepared are for a dwelling that suits your needs and in particular are for a dwelling that is specifically designed to suit your site.



*Dwelling located close to existing mature screening to provide shelter*



*Dwellings situated on exposed hill top provides no shelter*



## House type examples.

This section focuses in a more detailed way on design issues associated with many houses types proposed in rural Kerry. It highlights the most recurrent inappropriate design elements appearing in planning applications and offers suitable alternatives for consideration.

From the single storey through to the two storey all successful rural dwellings share the same fundamental themes. Once the appropriate scale and height for a particular site and location have been identified, the next step is to design the dwelling house.



The main themes to achieve a successful rural house design are as follows:

- Horizontal roof scape, consistently pitched
- Roof pitch 35° - 45°
- Strong 'robust' chimney on ridge of roof
- Narrow plan depth
- Horizontal proportioned walls
- Clear simple lines with minimal projections
- Vertical emphasis to gables, windows and doors
- Solid doors with minimal glazing
- Maintain a constant theme throughout
- Use of indigenous materials.



The main themes to steer clear of are as follows:

- Deep plan 'bulky' styles
- Excessive scale relative to site size e.g. length and height
- Low pitch roofs, complicated roof shapes
- Wide gables
- Multiple projections including inappropriate bay window projections and angles
- Balconies
- Horizontal emphasis windows and doors with lateral glazing
- Mix of differing design styles
- Complex mix of window style and shape
- Random location of windows
- Narrow long chimneys located on roof plane/external chimneys
- Decorative fascia and frills
- Inappropriate use of building materials.

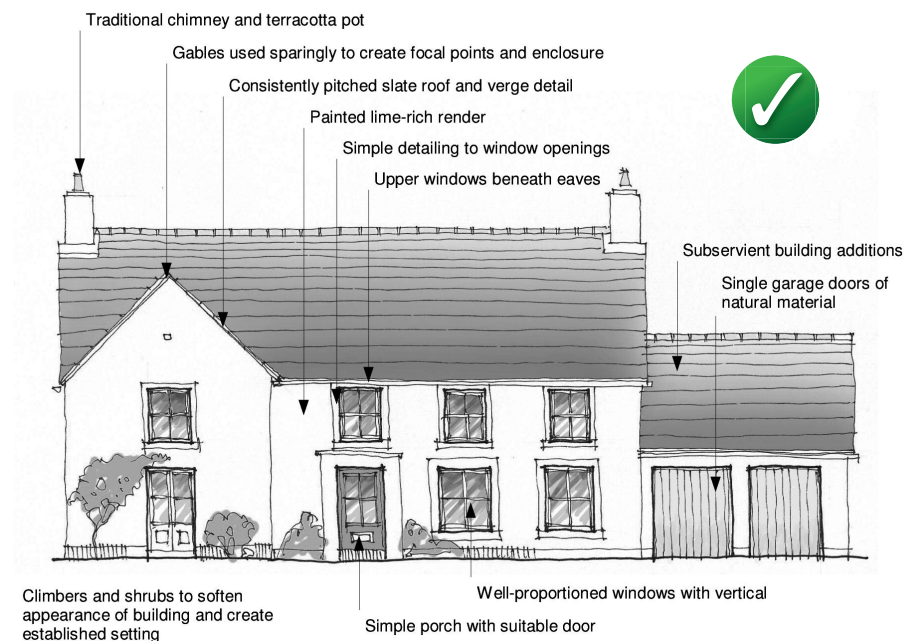
**It should be noted that these elements may be inappropriate in certain cases. Some contemporary designs may allow for the limited use of some of these elements in the production of an appropriate design to suit a particular site and location.**





**Complex Design - Unsympathetic**

The following sketches illustrate different house types particular to the rural area. Good and bad examples of similar size and scale are illustrated. These sketches are not shown in context so you are therefore advised to engage the services of a qualified architect/designer to take on board the relevant successful elements and themes highlighted in conjunction with Steps 1-3 as set out in previous sections before progressing to the design of your dwelling house. Contemporary interpretation will be considered on suitable sites.



**Simple Design - Sympathetic**

**Please note that these sketches should be used as a reference point only and not seen as an exhaustive list or final acceptable design.**



## Single-Storey Houses



### Try to avoid:

- Shallow pitched, hipped roof
- Projecting 'fussy' bay windows
- Applied stonework and decoration
- Over-scaled and elaborate door
- Randomly placed windows with horizontal emphasis and mixed detailing
- Dominant garage addition of artificial materials



### Aim to achieve:

- Uninterrupted pitched roof
- Eaves with simple end detail
- Chimneys flush with gables
- Well-proportioned arrangement of recessed openings
- Vertical window emphasis with plaster surround and sill
- Simple porch and door detailing
- Subservient additions (garage/workshop) with similar detailing

## Small Dormer Houses



### Try to avoid:

- Shallow pitched, over-sailing roof
- Over-scaled dormers
- Chimney on pitch of roof
- Randomly applied quoins
- Applied stonework and decoration
- Ornate portico
- Over-elaborate door
- Multi-paned windows flush with façade
- Inconsistent detailing around window openings



### Aim to achieve:

- Consistently pitched roof
- Minimal eaves and verge
- Chimneys flush with gables
- Well-proportioned arrangement of recessed openings
- Simple porch and door detailing



## Large Dormer Houses



### Try to avoid:

- Use of breakfront elevation, giving unbalanced arrangement of main elements
- Complex hipped roof patterns
- Use of UPVc boxed eaves and barges
- Elaborate projecting bay windows
- Artificial stonework and unnecessary decoration
- Poorly divided windows with horizontal emphasis
- Sun room with hipped roof and ill-proportioned openings



### Aim to achieve:

- Consistently pitched roofs, with minimal eaves and verge, and chimneys flush to gables
- Simply stepped elevation retaining balanced composition and breaking long run of wallplate dormers
- Well-proportioned arrangement of recessed openings
- Vertical window emphasis with plaster surrounds and sills
- Simple porch and door detailing
- Subsistent additions (sun room) with similar detailing

## Large Two Storey Houses



### Try to avoid:

- Addition of protruding elements to main elevation (e.g. octagonal turret and double bay windows)
- Confused ridge lines and gables
- Use of UPVc boxed eaves and barges
- Poorly spaced and proportioned windows
- Over-emphasised door
- Unnecessary quoinage and lintel detailing
- Dominant garage with 'up and over' door of artificial material



### Aim to achieve:

- Uninterrupted ridge lines with consistently pitched roofs
- Simple plan with extensions in proportion to the main building
- Garage in secondary location and of appropriate scale and materials
- Balanced door and window openings with simple detailing
- Conservatory/Sun room of appropriate scale and natural materials



## Materials/Colour.

A limited palette of materials that included mainly rendered walls with slate or thatched roofs traditionally dominated the character of rural Kerry.

For those considering building in the rural area, a limited range of materials is also considered most appropriate for today's rural dwelling. Too many materials and inappropriate use can produce fussy and complicated dwellings. The recent trend of attaching stone cladding as a 'design feature' on dwellings can result in the dwelling appearing more complex and can impact negatively on the overall design.

The following range of materials are considered the most appropriate to the rural area:

- Rendered and painted blockwork
- Black/dark grey or blue-black slates
- Timber windows and doors (the use of wood grain upvc could be considered as an alternative to white upvc)
- The use of natural local stone where appropriate, i.e. where integral to the overall design concept. The use of stone if applied appropriately can help integrate a dwelling house into its surrounds, and also help to 'break up' a larger dwelling house. The use of fake 'stuck on' stone cladding should be avoided at all costs.



*Fussy inappropriate materials - not traditional in the rural area*

- Garish loud colour
- Add on frills, over dressed
- Brick features
- Ornate fascias and chimney pots
- Bad conservatory design
- Ridge cresting on roof



*External finishes are best kept simple, opt for a small number of high quality finishes*

- 'Natural' soft colour
- Tidy eaves treatment
- Timber windows
- Planting contact with house
- Natural slate
- Conservatory in keeping with the house design

Colour traditions can vary across the county. However, the colour scheme that you choose for your dwelling house can have a significant impact on how the structure will integrate into the landscape and can if chosen incorrectly cancel out all previous successful work in finding the appropriate site. Therefore bright garish colours such as yellows, pinks, blues and reds, etc. should not be used; the 'two tone look' where a feature of the building is highlighted in a bright colour should also be avoided. In general, the colour of the roof of your dwelling should be the strongest colour used on the building.

**Keep colours muted, use earth tones, such as grey, brown and green to help integrate your dwelling into the landscape.**

In summary, using a limited mix of materials and keeping the colour palette simple, using muted earthy tones will assist in integrating your dwelling more successfully into the rural landscape, thereby increasing your chances of gaining planning permission. Remember when it comes to materials and colour in the rural area 'Less is more'.



*The use of red brick is not acceptable for use on a rural dwelling.*



*Keep colours muted, use earth tones to integrate your dwelling into the landscape.*



*The use of bright colours is generally more appropriate in an urban setting.*



## Extensions/Sunrooms/Garages.

When choosing a site and deciding on a house type, it is advisable to consider how you might extend such a dwelling in the future should the need arise.

Too often people ignore the possibility of future extensions, as a result extensions often end up looking inappropriate and as 'stuck on features'.

At an early stage in the design process, it is advisable therefore to consider how well your dwelling will be able to respond to your changing needs including space requirements - where would you locate an extension if required and how might an extension impact on the overall design of the dwelling.

Extensions should have regard to the design of the existing dwelling house on site, the topography of the land within the site, site size, neighbouring properties, treatment system capacity and location on site.

In the case of extensions the scale should be subsidiary to that of the main dwelling house. As a general rule, maintaining the existing ridge height or stepping it down from the existing dwelling house can be considered appropriate. However attempts to increase the ridge height, for example to go up one floor from single storey to two storey, can be very difficult to design successfully and is not recommended.

The narrow plan house provides much opportunity for successful expansion at a later date. The construction of an extension onto an existing dwelling house can also provide an opportunity to create a private courtyard space and sun trap to the rear of the dwelling house.



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*An appropriate contemporary extension onto an existing building*



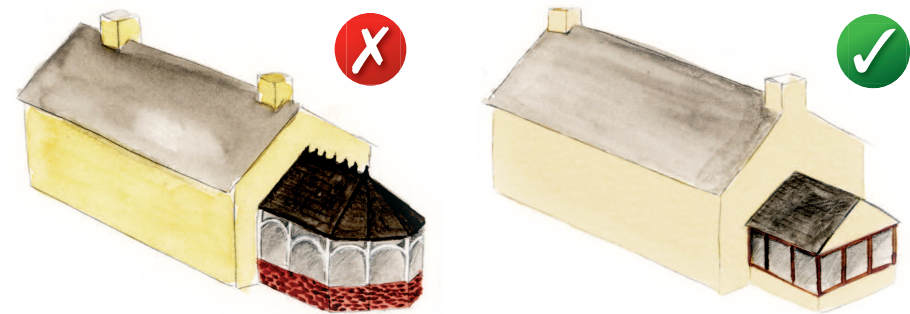
19

*Contemporary style porch*

Sunrooms are often an after thought to the design of the main dwelling house and can appear just that - an after thought, 'stuck onto' the main dwelling. This should not be the case. A sunroom as so called should be an opportunity to increase the solar gain to the dwelling house. A sunroom should be a pleasant space to use and look at. To achieve this the style of roof and materials used should reflect that of the main dwelling house.

A detached garage is often a necessity for domestic storage purposes. The garage should not detract from the design of the main dwelling house but rather should compliment the existing dwelling house on site. The location of a garage should be considered carefully and not just sited in a line with the dwelling house. Locating the garage to the rear of the dwelling house in an informal cluster can ensure the garage is not adding excessively to the bulk and scale of the main dwelling house. The style of roof and materials used should reflect that of the main dwelling house.

Metal sheds, log cabins and containers generally look out of place and are not appropriate in a rural setting.



*Poor conservatory design*

*Good conservatory design*



*Sun space is appropriately integrated into the main dwelling*



*Detached garage complements existing dwelling on site*



*Contemporary south facing sun space to the rear of the house*



# Renovations.

The renovation of a traditional vernacular dwelling house in a rural area is encouraged.

This is a very sustainable approach when considering a home in a rural area and can be quite a straight forward approach to obtaining a rural dwelling. Extensions can be considered where appropriate with the opportunities for contemporary style.

You are strongly advised to engage the services of a conservation architect when considering renovation and extension to a vernacular dwelling house/protected structures.



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*The traditional two storey structure provides endless opportunities for renovation and extension to suit modern day living.*



24

*Contemporary style extension onto a traditional dwelling house*



25

## Conclusion.

The key to a successful development is to get the basics right and to keep things simple.

Getting the location and siting right significantly increases your chances of getting planning permission. Remember the right site in the right location also allows for greater flexibility in design and house type including the modern interpretation of the traditional rural type dwelling. For those wishing to build an elaborate suburban type dwelling on a prominent site, positioned for everyone to see, building in the rural area is not for you.

The same issue appears again and again in the assessment of planning applications, resulting in delays, frustration and expense of drawing up new sets of plans, where applicants try to retro fit a standard design onto an unsuitable site. As the number of suitable sites available becomes more limited due to increasing risk of impacts on public health, diminishing capacity of road networks and impact on visual amenity, the onus will be on you, in conjunction with your architect/designer to satisfy the Planning Authority that you have considered the advice outlined above and can answer successfully the following questions:

- Have you selected the most suitable site in terms of location and siting, from the available landholding?
- Have issues of visual impact including existing boundary screening and layout, proximity to existing settlement clusters (particularly important for open coastal areas), ground conditions and traffic safety etc been carefully considered?
- Has your dwelling been designed to suit the characteristics of your site?
- Is the dwelling of an appropriate scale, height and mass, to allow for maximum integration?

**Remember - Ambitious landscaping proposals will not compensate for getting the location, siting or house design wrong.**

A significant amount of research, thought and expertise are required to address in full the above questions to ensure a successful outcome to your planning application. These guidelines are important and should be referred to and used to give guidance on the location, siting and design of rural dwellings. The guidelines embrace the best principles of the traditional rural dwelling while allowing for design innovation and contemporary interpretations which reinforce the traditional characteristics of building in the rural area.



## APPENDIX 1

NOTE: All sites have individual characterisation. A fully qualified person should always be consulted.

### BOUNDARY TREATMENTS (Native)

NAME	LATIN NAME	SUITABILITY	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	HEIGHT
<b>Alder</b> ( <i>Common Alder</i> )	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	Streamside, damp or waterlogged sites.	Fast growing, easy to establish, good in clay. Fill and wet soils.	Will not flourish in stagnant water.	20-30 meters
<b>Ash</b> ( <i>Common Ash</i> )	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Open woodland and hedgerows.	Good in windswept, exposed and coastal sites.	Will not grow in shade.	20-35 meters
<b>Birch</b> ( <i>White Birch</i> )	<i>Betula pubescens</i>	Hedgerows, woods banks and dense thickets.	Prefers dry sandy soils.	Dislikes wet, poorly drained sites.	10-20 meters
<b>Birch</b> ( <i>Silver Birch</i> )	<i>Betula Pendula</i>	Hedgerows, woods banks and dense thickets.	Good in damp and poor soils, for sheltering slower growing species.	Dislikes dry sandy soils.	15-25 meters
<b>Blackthorn</b>	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Woods and hedgerows.	Good in stoney soils, windswept, exposed and coastal sites.	Can inflict nasty wounds.	5-15 meters
<b>Cherry</b> ( <i>Bird Cherry</i> )	<i>Prunus padus</i>	Edge of woodlands.	Thrives in damp acid soils.	Dislikes and will not thrive in the shade.	8-16 meters
<b>Cherry</b> ( <i>Wild Cherry</i> )	<i>Prunus avium</i>	Streamside and edge of woodlands.	Thrives in damp limestone areas.	Dislikes and will not thrive in the shade.	15-32 meters
<b>Crabapple</b>	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	Hedgerows and woodlands.	Likes neutral or slightly alkaline soils.	Prefers full sun.	6-10 meters
<b>Dog Rose</b>	<i>Rosa canina</i>	Hedges and land reclamation, good shelter plant.	Will thrive in most types of soil.	Dislikes extreme wet or dry soils.	2-3 meters
<b>Elder</b> ( <i>Elder or Elder Berry</i> )	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Hedgerows scrub/wasteland and woodland edges.	Likes limey nitrogen rich soils.	Not suitable for children Berries if eaten raw can cause stomach upset.	3-7 meters
<b>Elm</b> ( <i>Wych Elm</i> )	<i>Ulmus Glabra</i>	Hedgerows and woodlands.	Tolerant of most soils but prefers well drained sites.	Prone to dutch elm disease.	24-40 meters
<b>Guellder- Rose</b>	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	Hedgerows and scrublands.	Will thrive in soggy partialy shaded sites likes limey soils.	Not the most graceful looking.	4-5 meters
<b>Hawthorn</b> ( <i>Common Hawthorn</i> )	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hedgerows and scrub.	Good protection for saplings, deters livestock.	Dislikes acid soils and wet sites.	5-14 meters
<b>Hazel</b> ( <i>Common Hazel</i> )	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hedgerows and woodlands.	Prevents erosion of thin soils.	Dislikes acid soils.	3-8 meters
<b>Holly</b>	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Hedgerows and woodlands.	Evergreen and tolerant of exposure.	Dislikes wet sites and is difficult to establish.	10-25 meters

**BOUNDARY TREATMENTS (Native) continued.**

NAME	LATIN NAME	SUITABILITY	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	HEIGHT
<b>Honeysuckle</b> (Common Honeysuckle)	Lonicera periclymenum	Hedgerows, woodlands and scrubland.	Attractive flowers and hardy.	Invasive.	6-10 meters
<b>Oak</b> (Sessile Oak)	Quercus petraea	Best in own groups.	Likes acid upland sites.	Prefers lighter well drained soils and is slow to grow.	20-40 meters
<b>Oak</b> (Pedunculate Oak)	Quercus pedunculata	Best in own groups.	Likes basic fertile soils including heavy soils.	Slow to grow.	30-40 meters
<b>Privet</b> (Common Privet)	Ligustrum vulgare	Hedgerows and woodlands.	Can tolerate most locations and harsh treatment.	Berries are poisonous to humans.	3-5 meters
<b>Rowan</b> (Mountain Ash)	Sorbus aucuparia	Hedgerows and woodland edges.	Very tolerant of a wide range of soils and can withstand high altitude.	On poor soils suffers from premature ageing.	8-10 meters
<b>Willow</b> (White Willow)	Salix alba	Streamside and hedgerows.	Fast growing, easy to establish, good in clay, fill and wet soils.	Susceptible to several diseases.	10-30 meters
<b>Willow</b> (Crack Willow)	Salix fragilis	Streamside and hedgerows.	Grows rapidly.	Will not grow in the shade.	10-20 meters
<b>Spindle</b> (Common Spindle)	Euonymus europaeus	Hedgerows, woodlands and slopes.	Thrives in nutrient rich, chalky and salt poor soils.	Not suitable for children. Fruits are poisonous.	3-6 meters
<b>Strawberry Tree</b> (Otherwise known as the Irish strawberry tree or the Killarney strawberry tree indigenous to Kerry.)	Arbutus unedo L	Hedgerows or stand alone.	Grows well in limey soils.	Needs shelter and well drained soil.	5-10 meters
<b>Beech</b> (Common Beech)	Fagus sylvatica	Woodlands.	Not demanding when it comes to soil type.	Will not tolerate stagnant water or excessive dryness.	25-35 meters
<b>Chesnut</b> (Horse Chesnut)	Aesculus hippocastanum	Stand alone or as part of boundary.	Grows in nearly any soil type but seems to prefer a sandy loam.	Needs lots of room.	25-30 meters
<b>chesnut</b> (Sweet Chesnut)	Castanea sativa	Stand alone or as part of boundary.	Requires mild climate and adequate moisture for good growth & nut harvest.	Sensitive to late spring and early autumn frosts.	20-35 meters
<b>Fuchsia</b>	Fuchsia magellanica	Hedgerows.	Likes full sun, partial shade or shade.	Needs well drained soil.	2-2.5 meters
<b>Lime</b> (Common Lime)	Tilia x europaea	Stand alone or as part of boundary.	Attractive to bees, butterflies and birds.	Carries a heavy aphid populations resulting in honeydew deposits on everything underneath.	8-12 meters
<b>Sycamore</b>	Acer pseudoplatanus	Stand alone or as part of boundary.	Tolerant of wind, pollution and salt spray.	Spreads very easily.	20-35 meters



## APPENDIX 2

### Overview of the Planning Process

#### LEGAL PROCESS

There are formal statutory procedures set down in the Planning and Development Acts, Regulations and Circulars, which govern the documentation, timescales, cost, and public involvement in relation to making a planning application. Please refer to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, [www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie) and information leaflets available in the Planning Office and on the Kerry County Council website, [www.kerrycoco.ie](http://www.kerrycoco.ie)

#### ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

In relation to an application for a house in the rural countryside, the following are the main issues addressed in deciding on the application.

##### 1. Compliance with Zoning Provisions and Designations

Certain areas of land throughout the County have National and Local Designations which in certain instances may restrict the type of development permitted on these lands. Applicants should be aware of the designations pertaining to their sites and the effect it may have on an application. Please refer to the County Development Plan.

##### 2. Compliance with the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines as incorporated in the current County Development Plan.

This relates to the eligibility of an applicant to live in the rural countryside in the context of his/her roots, place of work, family circumstances, etc. and is a critical element of the application assessment. It is important therefore that the applicant is familiar with these documents and completes the Supplementary Information section of the application form thoroughly. A land-holding map is also an important element of the planning documentation to be submitted.

##### 3. Compliance with the EPA manual on 'Treatment Systems for Single Houses'

The Agent undertaking the site assessment must be on the Councils Panel of Site Assessors and must carry out the tests and complete the site characterisation form as required by the Planning Authority in accordance with the EPA guidelines and to the satisfaction of the Environment Section of the Local Authority. Applicants should be aware that in Kerry, due mainly to the geology

of the County, many sites are not suitable for on site effluent treatment and Proprietary Treatment Systems cannot dispose of the effluent if the ground conditions are unsuitable. A trial hole to determine approximate ground conditions should be excavated at an early stage.

##### 4. Compliance with the required sightlines when creating a new access/exit.

Compliance is critical in order to ensure the safety of road users and persons entering/exiting the development.

##### 5. Compliance with Integration and Design and addressing Visual impact.

This is the criteria addressed in this document.

Customer Service:

There are a number of services provided by the Planning Section of Kerry County Council which should be availed of by applicants. These are as follows:

###### a) Office Pre-Planning

This service is available to all applicants and is available by contacting the Planning Department and the relevant Area Planner and making an appointment to meet. Meetings can usually be arranged within 3 weeks and it is sometimes beneficial for both parties if the planner receives a location map for the proposed development at least one week prior to the meeting.

###### b) On-Site Pre-Planning

An on-site pre-planning service is available to a family member wishing to build a dwelling house on family land. In this instance the Area Planner will meet the applicant and/or Agent on the site. Meetings can be arranged as per the office pre-planning meetings but may take up to 6 weeks.

###### c) Kerry County Council website ([www.kerrycoco.ie](http://www.kerrycoco.ie))

###### d) Office queries (066 7183582)

The Planning Department can be contacted at Rathass, Tralee between the hours of 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday (including lunchtime) and most general queries can be answered with a phone call.

## PHOTO AND HOUSE DESIGN CREDITS

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COUNTY BUILDINGS  
TRALEE  
CO. KERRY

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