



Design Guide for the Siting and Design of Single Houses within the Leitrim Countryside.



*"Design imbued
with messages
from the past"*



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Illustrations by local Artist Sandra Vernon



INTRODUCTION

This guide aims to assist in the siting and design of single houses located within the Leitrim Countryside.

It is considered that the traditional Design and Siting of houses within the countryside provides a good reference for contemporary design solutions. This guide points towards traditional design solutions that have tended to be overlooked, given the trends in rural house designs and siting over the past few decades. This is not to suggest that new houses in the Countryside should replicate the traditional designs.

The Council encourages innovative house designs and site layouts that harmonise with the landscape and respect well established planning principles.

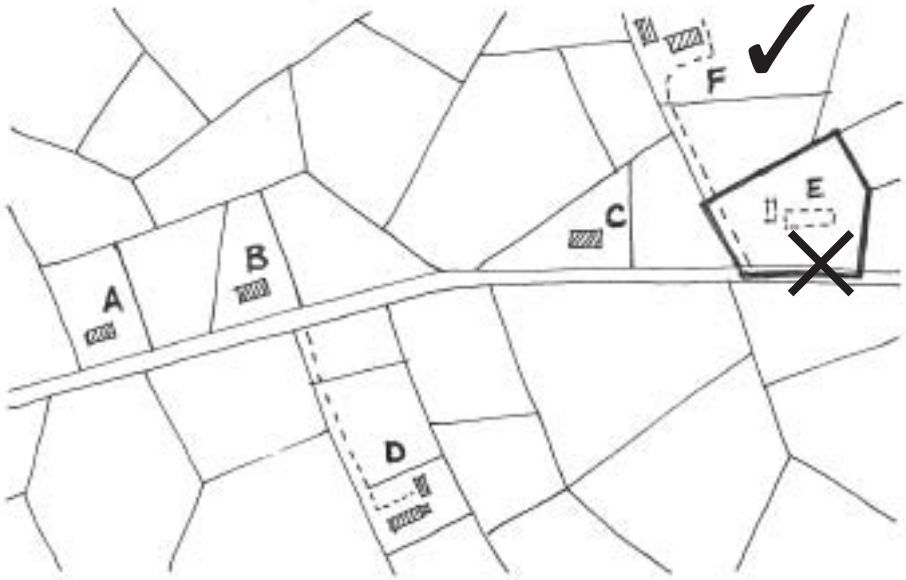
The County Development Plan provides the framework for the planning and control of development within the County. Within certain area of the County, the Plan provides for the operation of stricter planning control measures in order to protect our natural heritage and to ensure the proper use of resources in the interest of the common good. Rural dwellings form part of the landscape and they can under certain circumstances add to the economic and social well being of rural areas. The challenge is to find design solutions that accommodate the needs and reasonable expectations of the present generation without depriving future generations of the best of today's environment.

The principles and guidance set out in this document are presented to assist developers and their agents in devising designs that will be generally acceptable in the rural landscape of County Leitrim. The principles are not prescriptive or absolute.

Departure from the principals set out herein will however require full justification.

It is recognised that other forms, materials and architectural presentations will suit certain situations. However adherence to the document will generally ensure designs acceptable to the Planning Authority.

SITE SELECTION



Traditional siting of buildings can provide a good reference for future development.

SITES A, B AND C are a poor reference for a future development. These houses are located along the roadside bearing little relationship to their rural setting and giving rise to an undesirable pattern of road frontage development.

SITE D is a good reference for a future development. The house is located in a secluded, sheltered location and thereby in harmony with the rural character of the area.

SITE E is a visually obtrusive location and one that would extend an undesirable pattern of development.

SITE F is a location that would reflect the traditional site selection criteria of the area and would thereby be in harmony with the rural character of the area.

SITING

In the countryside the house and ancillary buildings should be subservient to the landscape.



- Seek a location where the house blends in well into the landscape.
- The house should normally nestle in a sheltered location using the landscape and planting as protection. The traditional siting of houses provides a good reference – they normally sought a sheltered location rather than a visually prominent one.
- Consider the direction of the prevailing winds, the path of the sun and prospect in the design and siting of the house and ancillary buildings.
- Traditionally ancillary buildings were used to cluster and shelter the house and this arrangement could be adopted in the design and layout of modern buildings.
- The front building line of the house need not necessarily be parallel to the public road. The building line may be influenced by existing development in the area.



- Avoid visually obtrusive locations. The house should not be the prominent feature in the landscape.
- Avoid "forcing" the house into the landscape through major earthwork operations and creating landforms that are incongruous with the natural landscape. Seek the gentler part of a slope, or a naturally occurring shelf or fold in order to secure the integration of the house into the landscape.
- Avoid locations where the buildings break the sky-line or water line when viewed from the public vantage points.
- If exposed to the winds the house will suffer excessive heat loss and discomfort.

FORM

The practice of using standard designs suburban in character should be avoided and fails to realise the potential of the site.



- Simple forms are most successful.
- The traditional linear plan form and pitched roof is the most common shape.
- Generally roof pitches of 35° to 45° are best.
- Single storey designs are generally more appropriate in visually prominent areas.
- Large plan areas are best divided into units.
- Forms should respect the site contours.



- Bulky forms should be avoided.
- Forms that are alien to our architectural heritage should be avoided.

DESIGN MODIFICATIONS

Details such as roof pitches, window size and shape have been modified to create a house design appropriate for a rural setting.



A design of a typical suburban dwelling house can be simply modified to accommodate a rural setting.



MATERIALS AND FINISHES

The traditional design of houses provides a good reference for modern design solutions.



- Enclosed front porches are a feature of traditional houses. They announce the importance of the front entrance and provide shelter.
- A painted timber front door of a simple style is worth considering and can provide the house with a sense of individualism character.
- Simplicity of elevations is a familiar characteristic of traditional houses in the countryside and should be retained.
- Uniform external finishes and traditional elements and features are more successful.
- Blue/black slate or flat profile concrete tiles and plain plaster/dash external roof and wall finishes respectfully are, as a general rule, favoured by the Planning Authority.



- Avoid the use of inappropriate materials and colours. Traditional materials and finishes to elevations are generally successful.
- Avoid the importation into the countryside of suburban type elements and features such as, concrete boundary walls surrounding front and rear gardens, the overuse of brick or a riot of external finishes. The use of red brick is generally to be discouraged in rural areas.
- Avoid whimsical features and elements such as concrete baulstrading, non-functional shutters, columns, colonnades, mock Georgian and Tudor elements and features, Spanish arches etc.
- Avoid the use of open porches and the use of mock Georgian columns.
- Avoid the "pastiche" neo-Georgian and art-deco style front door.

SITE BOUNDARIES

The roadside boundary and entrance is an important element in securing the integration of the house into the landscape.

- Existing hedges, stone walls should be retained, augmented and protected during development works. Normally the house should be located in close proximity to existing field boundaries.
- Generally, where new boundaries are being created use unpainted treated timber post and rail fencing backed with indigenous hedgerow material.
- Retain and augment or reinstate roadside hedgerows, trees, banks and stone walling in order to maintain the local character of roadways. Roadside planting screens the house from public view, creating privacy, intrigue and helps integrate the house into its surroundings. Plant within the first planting season after the commencement of development work and use half standard trees to achieve early integration.
- Where for traffic safety reasons it is appropriate to set back the front boundary the new boundary should reflect the original form in so far as practical.





- Avoid the destruction of hedgerows, trees and existing field stone walling.
- Avoid complex, overly ornate fence designs.
- Avoid the over use of non-indigenous planting.
- Avoid the use of red brick and unplastered concrete boundary walling with light capping.
- Avoid overly ornate gates and other whimsical features such as excessive outdoor lighting, garish garden furniture and garden features unsympathetic to the area.
- Garden lighting should not give rise to a traffic hazard.

EXTENSIONS AND CONVERSIONS

- Extensions should look Subsidiary to the main house.
- External finishes should match those of the main house.



- Avoid forms and external finishes that are incongruous with the main house.





- Extensions should be in harmony with the main house.
- Extensions to the rear can provide a sheltered patio space/supervised play area.

CONVERSIONS

- The retention of the original architectural character of the building to be converted is an important consideration.
- Structural alterations should be kept to a minimum.
- Extensions or new buildings should only be contemplated where they reinforce the architectural integrity of the existing building.
- Special care should be taken with buildings of obvious architectural distinction e.g churches, schools, listed buildings etc.
- Disused farm buildings located close to a house may be successfully converted to a use ancillary to that of the house.

WINDOWS

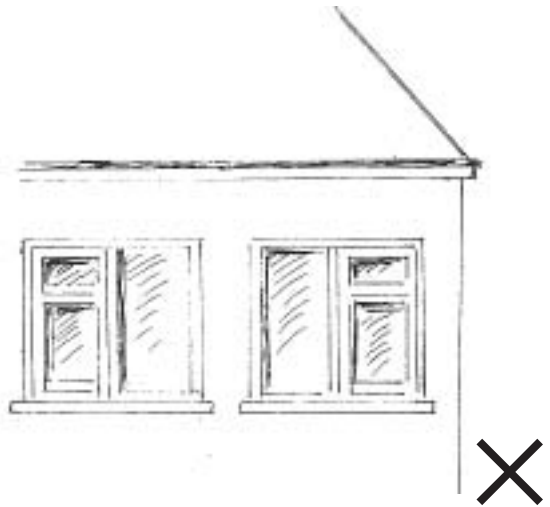


Traditional houses almost universally had windows with consistent and satisfactory proportions. Generally traditional windows were narrow and had a vertical emphasis and this design feature provides a good reference for modern house. Preservation of sliding sash timber windows should be encouraged in preference to PVC.

See Appendix I for details on window proportions.

To achieve vertical emphasis the overall height of the window should generally be greater than, but never less than its overall width, the subdivision of a square window with a glazing bar will achieve vertical emphasis.

A feature window whose overall width is greater than its height and that is divided by visually strong vertical members may be acceptable provided that the balance of the windows on the elevation have a vertical emphasis.



- Windows and doors that occupy a large proportion of the elevation can weaken the elevation especially if they are brought too close together or too close to the corner.
- Wide windows if required, should be subdivided in order to maintain a vertical emphasis. Wide windows should not be the general form of windows on the elevation but may form a feature window.
- Energy conservation should be considered in the design and location of windows.
- Avoid windows with a horizontal emphasis.
- Avoid windows close together or close to a corner.

DORMER WINDOWS

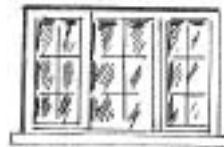
- Windows should have a vertical emphasis
- Window at first floor level should have a generous wall surround
- Avoid PVC finish to gable ends
- Roof pitch should be in excess of 35°
- Window openings to comply with Building Regulations



The mid point of the windows at first floor level shall be position at a level near that of the eaves line

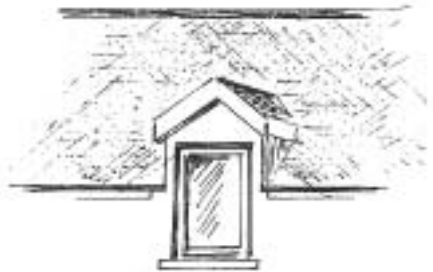


- Avoid inappropriate window proportions
- Avoid red ridge tiles
- Avoid too many divisions in window
- Avoid low roof pitch

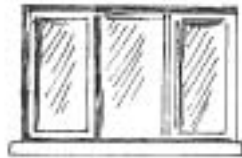


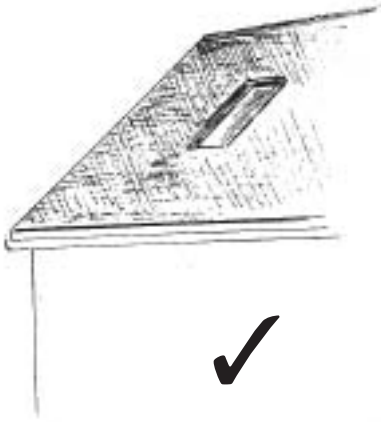


Window located too high in main roof
Avoid arched windows

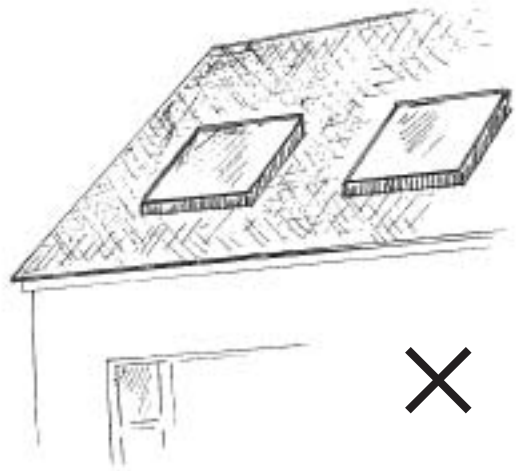
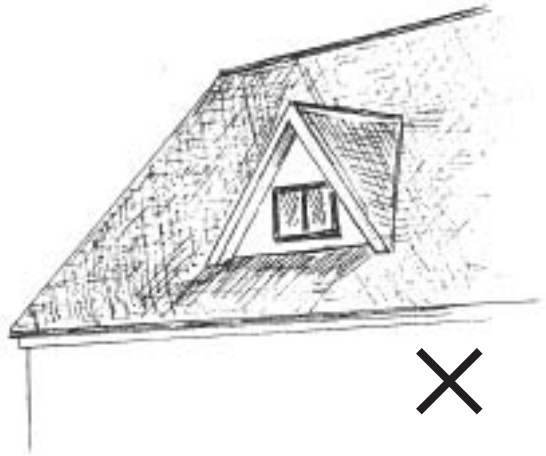
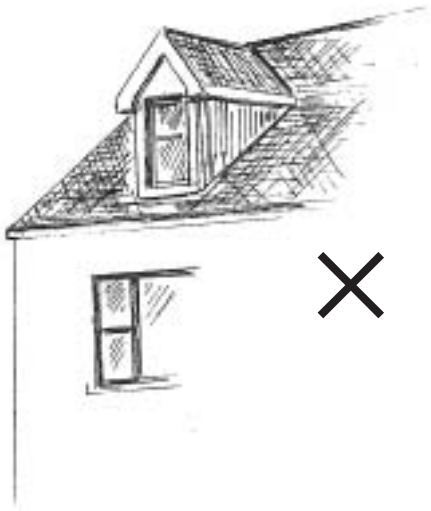


Little or no wall surround to window
At first floor level
Avoid P.V.C. sheeting to window surround





- Simplicity of elevations is a familiar characteristic of traditional houses and should be retained.
- Dormers located midway along the line of the eaves and flush with the front wall of the house are a feature of traditional houses and can be successfully adopted. They should have a generous surround of walling towards the front elevation and the cheeks should be finished to match the wall or roof.



- The use of dormers that punctuate the roof should generally be avoided.
- Roof lights if used should not dominate the pitch of the roof and should if possible be located on the rear pitch of the roof.

GABLES

- A uniform plain plaster/dash external wall finish is generally successful in the treatment of the elevation. The use of local stone may be successfully used in areas where stone is prevalent.
- Gable walls that project above the plain of the roof are a feature of traditional houses and a good reference for modern designs.



- Avoid large and numerous opening in gables. As with all elevations the total area of windows and door openings should be less than the area of solid wall. Avoid locating windows too close to the corners of the house as they can weaken the appearance of the elevation.
- Avoid using gables as the front façade of the house.

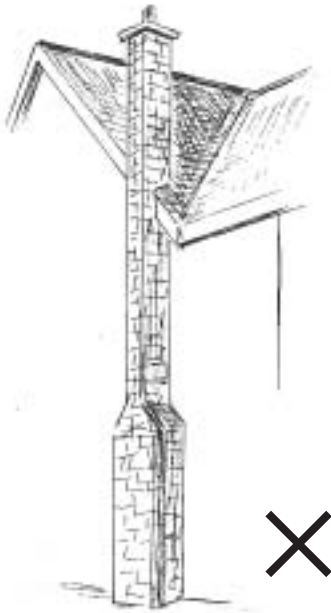
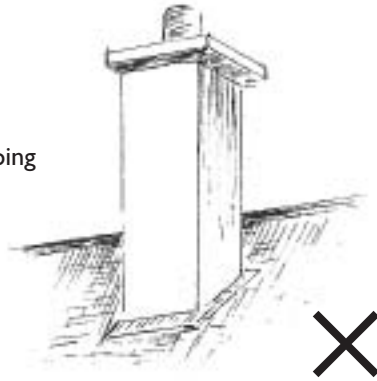


CHIMNEYS

Chimneys should be visually robust and located on the ridge line if possible. They should be in proportion to the house



Avoid tall slender chimneys with thin capping and haunching.



Avoid over elaborate chimney designs.

PORCHES

SMALL SCALE PORCH



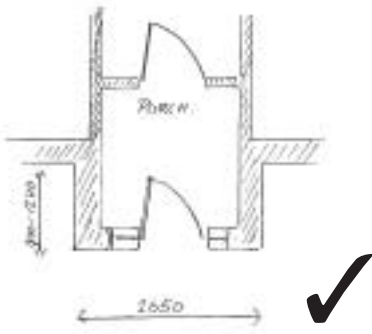
FRONT ELEVATION

Simple style porch and doorway is preferred.
Provide generous wall surround to doorway.
Selected coloured door with white frame is preferred.
35° - 45° roof pitch is preferred.

LARGER SCALE PORCH

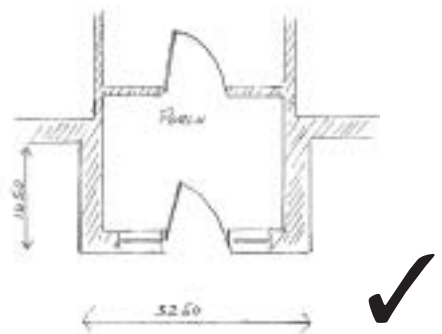


FRONT ELEVATION

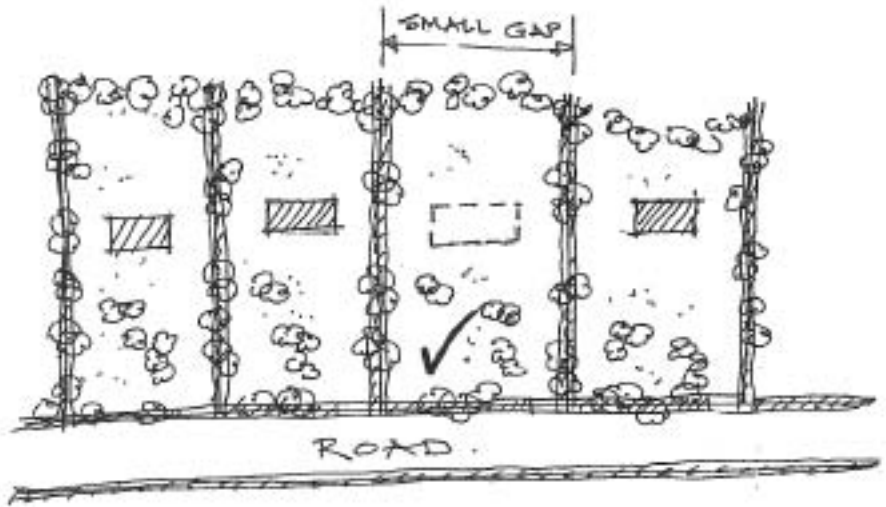


PLAN

Provide for access for persons with disabilities.



INFILL



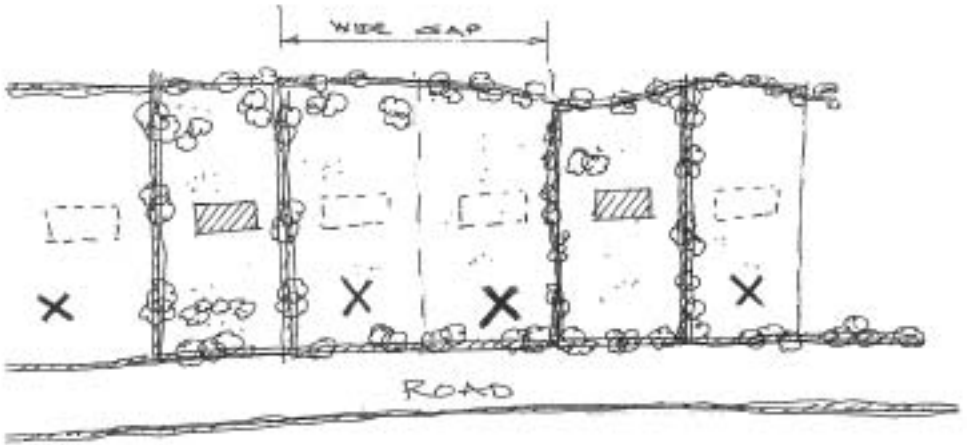
Existing House



Proposed House

- Acceptable

The development must involve the filling of a small gap (circa 30m to 40m) in a developed road frontage and in general the minimum area must be 0.30 Ha



 Existing House

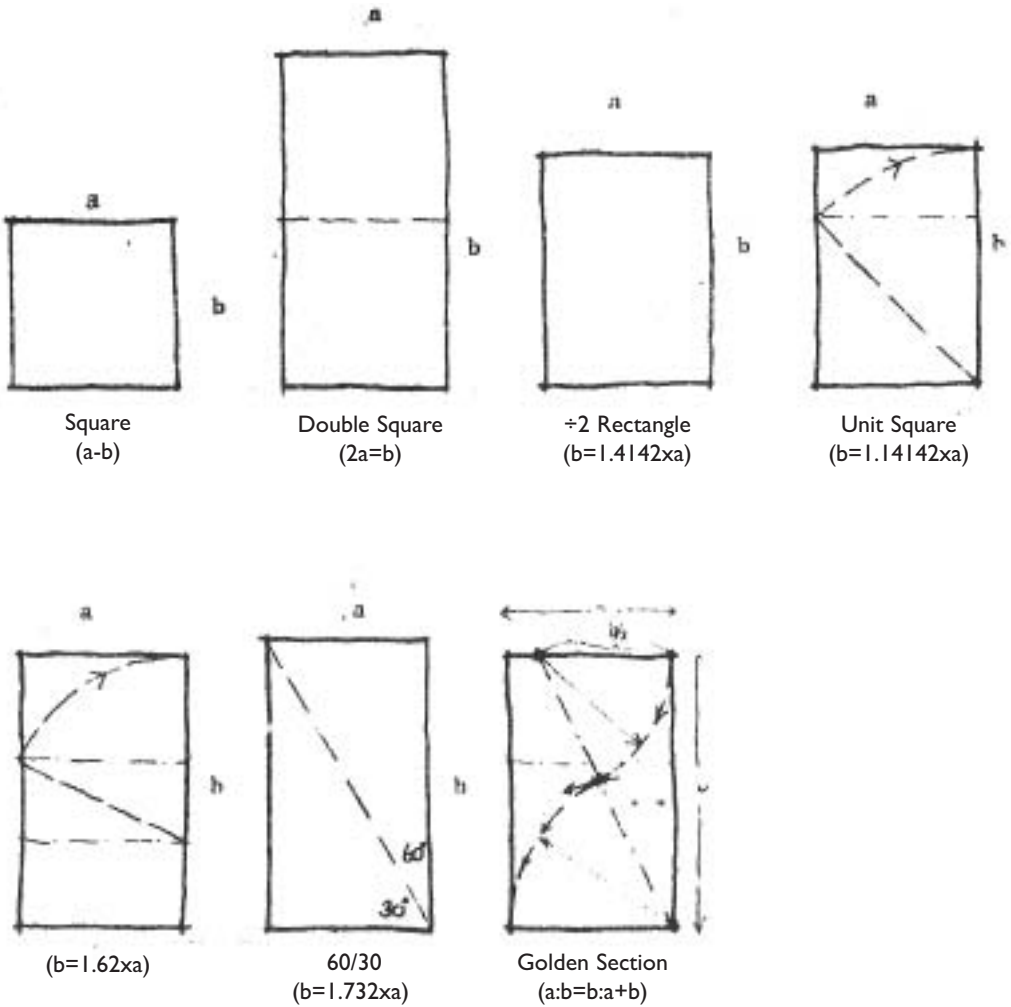
 Proposed House

- Unacceptable

The development should not give rise to;
an adverse change in the character of the area,
a traffic hazard,
a risk to public health
a risk of pollution,
Ribbon of development.

APPENDIX I

WINDOW PROPORTION



Some of the methods used for setting out shapes of harmonious proportions in the design of buildings. Designs at the higher levels of Architecture (particularly in the Georgian period) have been consistently based on the use of such "rules".

APPENDIX 2

REFERENCES:

1. Design Guidelines for Single Houses in the Countryside
"Building Sensitively and Sustainably in the Countryside".
Louth County Council
2. "Building Sensitively in Irelands Landscapes"
Bord Failte, An Taisce and Galway County Council
3. Design Guidelines for Single Houses in County Limerick
"Design Guidelines"
Limerick County Council Planning Department March 2001
4. "Siting and Design in Rural Areas"
Prepared by Brady Shipman Martin & ARC Digital Photography
Fingal County Council
5. "Cork Rural Design Guide"
Cork County Council Guidelines

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Web Site Address

Leitrim County Council – www.leitrimcoco.ie

The Heritage Council – www.heritagedata.ie - Duchas

Department of the Environment – www.environ.ie/devindex.html

Board Pleanala – www.pleanala.ie

Information Leaflets

Government produced leaflets available from the Planning Department, Leitrim County Council;

- A Guide to Planning Permission
- Making a Planning Permission
- Commenting on a Planning Application
- Building a House – The Planning Issues
- Doing Work Around The House – The Planning Issues
- Agricultural and Farm Development – The Planning Issues
- Planning for the Business Person
- The Development Plan
- Environmental Impact Statements
- Making a Planning Approval
- A Guide to the Building Regulations

The above Information Leaflets are also available on the Department of the Environmental Web Site.

Additional Information Leaflets are available from the Planning Department, Leitrim County Council.

1. Explanatory Guide to Completing the Planning Application.
2. Windows of Leitrim – "the large scale replacement of sliding timber windows with hinged frames of different designs and materials, particularly the use of uPVC, has eroded the quality of County Leitrim's older building stock".
3. Don't get stoned get plastered – "exposed rubble stone walls are not traditional, nor are they healthy for the buildings themselves".

APPENDIX 4

List of Native Deciduous Trees and Shrubs - suitable for inclusion in the landscaping of Sites in Rural Areas:

TREES

Alder

Ash

Birch, Downy and Silver

Wild Cherry

Crab Apple

Hazel

Holly

Oak, Sessile

Oak, Pedunculate

Rowan

Scots Pine

Willow

Yew

SHRUBS

Blackthorn

Bramble

Dog Rose

Elder

Gorse

Guelder Rose

Hawthorn

Honeysuckle/Ivy

Successful Interpretation of Traditional Design



Successful Interpretation of Traditional Design





*The Planning Department • Aras An Chontae
Leitrim County Council • Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim*