Sevenoaks
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Sevenoaks District Conservation Areas:

Appraisals revised in 2019

Conservation Area Design Guidance

If you are looking to make changes or additions to your property in a conservation area you'll find the following guidance helpful to ensure that your proposals are sympathetic to the character of your building and the wider area. The guidance is intended for both works that will require a planning application as well as providing general good practice guidance on changes that don't require planning permission from the Council.

Appendix I

1.0 Extensions

Location, scale, detailing and materials are important considerations when designing a new extension and successful extensions will be sympathetic to the building and wider conservation area. Please consider the guidance below when looking to extend your property.

Guidance

New extensions should:

- Respond positively to the character and integrity of the original building;
- use materials that are appropriate to the age of the existing building;
- in most cases, be located to the rear of the existing building. This is an important consideration when the main elevation has been designed to be symmetrical;
- respect the character identified in the conservation appraisal by retaining important views from open spaces or from the village streets and respecting gaps and other spatial characteristics of the area;
- recognise the unity of a terrace or other group of adjoining buildings.

To help determine whether the impact of proposed development is harmful to the character and appearance of the conservation areas, applicants should undertake an assessment of the likely impact of their proposals on the built character of the area, on important views and on open space.

2.0 New buildings

A new building in a conservation area is an opportunity to enhance the area through high quality design that respects the townscape, architectural character, building forms and alignments. The conservation area appraisals identify buildings that detract from the character of the conservation areas and their sympathetic replacement is welcomed.

Guidance

When designing a new building please consider:

- materials, colours and textures that reflect the traditional building materials and architectural character of the conservation area;
- the scale of surrounding buildings and be proportional to the setting of the area;
- the form of the surrounding buildings. The predominant building form in most of the District's villages is the simple rectangular shape of two-storeys and (mostly) steeply pitched roofs, with the roof generally spanning a width of five to six metres;
- the typical building line of street in which they are located;
- the important views.

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3.0 Materials

Before transport improvements in the nineteenth century building materials were largely restricted to the range of materials found in the locality. This has resulted in locally distinct building traditions and vernacular detailing that shapes the appearance of the District's rural settlements, many of which exemplify the image of the 'traditional Kentish Village'.

A wide range of traditional building materials have been employed in the District. For walls, timber-framing with plastered or brick infill or external cladding with weatherboarding, tile hanging and brick is widespread. Other common materials include brick (mainly red brick), flint walling, or, where available, rag or sand stone. Traditional roofing materials include mainly clay plain tiles (historically Kent peg tiles) and on occasions thatch. Natural slate is rarely found on buildings dating

from before the 19th century. Very rarely, pantile roofs can be found, but these tend to be limited to outbuildings or single storey agricultural buildings.

The richness of historic buildings lies in the texture, colour and durability of the traditional materials, and the patina of age these acquire with time. The weathering of natural materials results in an appearance that improves with age, an effect which many modern artificial alternatives fail to achieve and which makes them unsuccessful additions in a historic built context.

For the choice of materials for replacement, new development, and alteration to existing buildings the following should be considered:

3.1 Brick

Bricks should reflect the type, size, texture and finish of traditional historic bricks on the relevant building or the surrounding area in general.

The type of brick bonding - The prevalent historic brick bond in the district is either Flemish or English bond, or English garden bond for boundary wall. Stretcher bond is overwhelmingly found in buildings dating from the early 20th century as cavity walling became prevalent. It is monotonous in appearance and will be only appropriate for buildings of that period.

3.2 Pointing

The type of pointing – The primary feature of a wall is the brick and the pointing should normally visually subservient to it. Pointing should be *"flush"* or slightly recessed rather than *"struck"*.

Avoid the use of cement based pointing for re-pointing historic brickwork or rendering. It is damaging to all building types, being impervious and inflexible, and trapping moisture and causing damp and rot. For more information see: https://www.spab.org.uk/advice/inappropriate-cement-pointing.

3.3 Timber

The type of timber and its traditional finish - Oak was used for timber-framing and joinery up to the 17th century and was generally left to weather naturally. Softwood was always painted. Stain is a modern preference and should be avoided.

Weatherboarding is traditionally painted in white or cream on houses, or sometimes black at less prominent elevations. Outbuildings and agricultural buildings traditionally have the weatherboarding tarred (i.e. are black) or have oak weatherboarding that is left unpainted.

4.0 Windows and doors

Windows are crucial elements to the appearance of a building and wider historic streetscape. The type of window, its detailing and material denote the architectural style and the period of construction of the building. In recent decades they have become particularly vulnerable to alteration and loss due to a variety of factors including lack of maintenance and concerns over energy efficiency.

4.1 Guidance

Original or historic windows can be often be repaired and refurbished. Sometimes slim-glazed units can be inserted into the historic frame. If replacement is necessary, match the originals in style, opening pattern, and detailing.

Extensive technical guidance on the care, repair and thermal upgrading of traditional windows are set out in guidance by Historic England: https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/traditional-windows-care-repair-upgrading/.

5.0 Roofscape

The undulating roofscapes of old handmade peg tiles are one of the most attractive features of the District's historic settlements. The width of buildings and the resulting roof pitch indicate the appropriate covering For example, peg tile roofs are steeply pitched normally between 42° and 50°, while slate and pantiles have a lower pitch of at least 30°, usually between 35° and 40°. Thatch is laid at a pitch of at least 55°.

The roof slopes of traditional buildings tend to be unbroken. Rooflights and dormer windows interrupt the simplicity of the form and may have a detrimental effect on the character of the buildings and quality of the roofscape of the area.

Guidance

- Sympathetic roof design will follow local tradition and relate to the existing historic roof details. When designing new roofs for extensions to existing buildings or for new buildings it is best to reflect the pitch of existing buildings and use appropriate tiles. On tiled roofs simple verges with undercloaks will normally be appropriate. Verges formed by the use of bargeboards must be generally avoided unless the building is rendered or weatherboarded.
- The plain tiles found on older buildings are traditionally hand-made, resulting in a roof that exhibits a particularly attractive uneven appearance due to the small differences between individual tiles. New hand-made tiles are available and are preferable in many situations to the uniformity of those that have been machine-made.
- Rooflights can be discreetly placed, using architectural features such as parapets and concealed valley or placed on rear roofslopes.
- Rooflights that sit flush to the roofscape minimise their prominence on the roofscape.
- Dormers which are carefully designed to match the character of the surrounding buildings and should be detailed in a simple style. They should not dominate the roofscape or be set close together.

6.0 Chimneys

Chimneys are an integral element to the design and appearance of historic buildings and often provide clues to the history and age of the property. As well as being functional, they were often designed for visual effect. Chimney stacks make an important contribution to the skyline of conservation areas.

Guidance

- Chimney stacks and pots should always be retained and repaired, where necessary. Where they are no longer required for heating, consider using them for boiler flues and external ventilation ducts;
- Where chimneys have been capped-off or truncated they should, wherever possible, be reinstated to their original detailing and height;
- The removal of internal chimney breasts to create additional internal space should allow for the retention of the external chimney stack. It is usually possible to provide internal structural support so that the chimney stack can remain intact externally;
- Original clay chimney should always be retained and re-bedded. Where replacement is necessary, or chimney pots have been lost, they can be reinstated with a suitable replica. Many of the traditional chimney pot models are still manufactured today.

7.0 Boundary treatments

Boundary treatments make an attractive and significant contributing to the setting of buildings and the character and appearance of the area in which they are situated. Historic boundary walls are a cherished part of the District's built heritage and there are examples of walls that are statutorily listed in their own right.

The repair of an existing, the reinstatement or the addition a new boundary treatment, which uses traditional forms and materials, can enhance the

conservation area. The type and detailing (including height) of boundary treatments is influenced various factors including:

- the location of the boundary in relation to the building to which they define the curtilage e.g. front or rear;
- the type of property;
- the period of construction of that property;
- the character of the wider streetscene and area i.e. rural/urban.

Guidance

- Successful replacement boundary treatments and new boundary walls and fences to new buildings will use the traditional materials and detailing prevalent in the conservation areas;
- Boundaries fronting the street tend traditionally to be low, rarely exceeding 90cm in height;
- Where buildings are part of a group, boundary treatments should take account of their visual relationship to neighbouring boundary treatments;
- In villages, picket fences, or, where there are historic examples, traditionally detailed low brick, flint or ragstone walls, are sympathetic choices;
- Post and rail timber fencing, simple estate railing, field gates and hedges are common at the fringes to settlements providing a transition into the countryside;
- Georgian and Victorian properties often have boundaries that are distinctive to the style of the main house, such as wrought and cast iron railings on low brick boundary walls;
- The type and design of traditional boundary treatments and gates reflect the type and status of the building they belong too. Boundaries to vernacular buildings are modest in character.

8.0 Aerials and satellite dishes

Aerials and satellite dishes along with associated wiring can add clutter to a building and this impact can be sometimes minimised. It is best to consider an alternative location to the side or the rear of a property. It also may be possible to locate the equipment away from the building.

Please consider the removal of any redundant aerials and equipment when no longer in use.

9.0 Improving energy efficiency

The Council encourages improving energy efficiency of existing buildings. This can be done sympathetically and without compromising the character of historic buildings. There is extensive guidance available from Historic England: https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/your-home/saving-energy/

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