

COTSWOLD DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN 2011-2031 (Adopted 3 August 2018)



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Built, Natural and Historic Environment 10

Policy EN1

BUILT, NATURAL AND HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

New development will, where appropriate, promote the protection, conservation and enhancement of the historic and natural environment by:

- a. ensuring the protection and enhancement of existing natural and historic environmental assets and their settings in proportion with the significance of the asset;
- b. contributing to the provision and enhancement of multi-functional green infrastructure;
- c. addressing climate change, habitat loss and fragmentation through creating new habitats and the better management of existing habitats;
- d. seeking to improve air, soil and water quality where feasible; and
- e. ensuring design standards that complement the character of the area and the sustainable use of the development.

10.2 Design of the Built and Natural Environment (POLICY EN2)

10.2.1 The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built and natural environment. It expects local authorities to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and addressing climate change, is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

10.2.2 The Cotswolds is widely recognised as an outstandingly beautiful area, rich in the architecture of every period and style. Many towns and villages contain impressive set pieces, ranging from a scatter of cottages around a green to gently curving town streets and market places. The design quality achieved in the past was generally very high. Local standards of traditional craftsmanship have been exceptional for hundreds of years

10.2.3 Heritage themes that contribute to the distinctiveness of the local built environment include:

- local stone building materials – dry-stone walls, Cotswold building stone, natural stone roof tiles;
- distinctive Cotswold vernacular;
- rural (agricultural) settlement patterns of isolated farmsteads and villages with market towns and a number of country houses with associated estates;

10 Built, Natural and Historic Environment

- Key local architects including important proponents of the Arts and Crafts Movement; and
- Roman archaeology of the District focused on Corinium. Obvious Roman roads, still in use as main roads through the District.

10.2.4 Well-designed development can contribute positively to the conservation, enhancement and creation of natural and historic environmental assets, including at the strategic level through, for example the enhancement of Nature Improvement Areas and long distance footpaths. High quality urban design and architecture also enables new development to integrate successfully with the historic environment, which is of particular importance for the historic towns and villages of the Cotswolds.

10.2.5 The built environment is as much about the spaces between and around the buildings or groups of building in a settlement as about the buildings themselves. For this reason, policy on Local Green Spaces is included in this section of chapter 10.

Policy EN2

DESIGN OF THE BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Development will be permitted which accords with the Cotswold Design Code (Appendix D). Proposals should be of design quality that respects the character and distinctive appearance of the locality.

10.2.6 This policy will be applied to all aspects of design – including architectural, landscape, ecological, urban and sustainable design - within developments of every scale, from conversions and small extensions to major residential sites and large employment facilities.

10.2.7 Whilst the PPG provides comprehensive direction on many general design considerations - such as sustainable design, connectivity and crime prevention - it is important to ensure that the local context is also fully considered. This is particularly so in an area renowned for the quality of its built and natural environment and which features very sensitive locations such as the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty together with numerous Conservation Areas.

10.2.8 There are a number of developments, particularly post-war housing schemes around some of the key settlements, where the character of the area has not been reflected in scheme design. These developments often have been built using standard house types and layouts that are not locally distinctive. The result is insensitive development that is not integrated with its surroundings either in character or in scale. The design of new developments must ensure that poor design quality is not replicated and that there is a sense of transition between the open countryside and an existing settlement's historic core and character.

10.2.9 As well as ensuring that local character and distinctiveness are retained and enhanced, there are other key local issues that the design of development should address. These include meeting the challenge of climate change mitigation and accommodating the District's ageing population. The latter

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signals the need to improve the health and well-being of residents through appropriate design of homes and open spaces. One of the ways this can be achieved is by adopting the principles of Lifetime Homes. In addition, an inclusive approach to design, which ensures that new developments are integrated both physically and socially with current communities and places, should be followed.

10.2.10 To address local development and design issues the Local Planning Authority has up-dated and broadened the scope of the Cotswold Design Code (originally produced in March 2000 as Supplementary Planning Guidance). It now includes landscape and green infrastructure design, and addresses some shortfalls in the 2000 version. Implementation of the new design code is key to the success of this design policy and other policies in the Local Plan.

10.2.11 The revised Cotswold Design Code (Appendix D) emphasises the requirement to design development so that it either follows an authentic vernacular and traditional approach, in line with the local architectural character, or that it is designed in a high quality contemporary and innovative manner, which reflects and respects local character. The decision whether to adopt a traditional or contemporary approach will depend on the type of development proposed, the site and its setting.

10.3 Local Green Spaces (POLICY EN3)

10.3.1 The NPPF makes provision for local communities to identify green areas of particular importance to those communities, where development will not be permitted except in very special circumstances. These Local Green Spaces can be designated through the local plan or through neighbourhood plans.

Policy EN3

LOCAL GREEN SPACES

1. The following areas are designated as Local Green Spaces:

LGS1: Blockley – Blockley Mill (also known as Water Board site)

LGS2: Bourton-on-the-Water – Manor Fields

LGS3: Church Westcote – Land adjacent to Close Cottage

LGS4: Cirencester – The Humpty Dumps

LGS5: Kemble – Green at West Lane

LGS6: Kemble – Community Gardens at Station Road (in conjunction with proposed housing allocation Policy S6, Site K_2)

LGS7: Kemble – Playing field at Clayfurlong

D Cotswold Design Code

Background

D.1 The Cotswolds is an outstandingly beautiful area, rich in built and natural heritage. The aim of this Design Code is to ensure the highest standards of new development, respecting the distinctive qualities of the District for the benefit of current and future generations.

D.2 This Design Code should be used in conjunction with national policy and guidance, including the NPPF and the PPG. These emphasise the importance of good design as a key aspect of sustainable development. It encourages high quality and inclusive design that establishes a strong sense of place and responds to local character.

D.3 This Code is intended to cover all aspects of design, within a Cotswold context. These aspects include architectural, urban, landscape, ecological and sustainable design. And the Code is relevant to a wide range of development, from householder extensions and alterations, to conversions, major residential schemes and large-scale commercial proposals. It is a material consideration in planning decisions and, set within the context of the Local Plan, carries considerable weight.

D.4 It may, in some cases, be appropriate to produce site specific design codes for significant development schemes.

Informing the Design – Resources and Information

D.5 This Design Code must be read in conjunction with policies EN2, INF7 and related policies.

D.6 All good design is informed both by the needs of the current and future users, and by a proper understanding of the site and its setting. These considerations are of particular importance where there is an existing high quality built and natural environment, as in Cotswold District.

D.7 There is a wealth of information on the natural, built and historic environment of the District, which is continually being expanded. Reference should be made to the Council's website for the most recent information and guidance produced by the Council and other organisations, including: landscape character assessments; conservation area appraisals; design guidance for individual architectural features; and community design statements. Site-specific information should also be sought, and the characteristics of the site and its wider surroundings should be carefully studied.

D.8 The Council's validation process clearly outlines the types of assessment that might be appropriate. These are likely to include, for example, landscape visual impact assessments, historic environment statements, and ecological appraisals. The type and scope of assessment required will relate to the development proposed and to the level of potential impact of that development.

Landscape, Settlements and Streets

D.9 Careful study should be made of the context of any new development. Each site will have its own characteristics, and a specific landscape or townscape setting. Any proposed development should respond to this.

D Cotswold Design Code

D.20 The design approach selected should respond to each site and its setting. The success of different design approaches, and in particular architectural styles, is very dependent on location. There are many valid approaches to the design of buildings, depending on their context. Due to the distinctive and consistent traditional architecture of the Cotswolds, a vernacular design approach is commonly successful. On some sites a contemporary approach, well-executed, can be appropriate. These two design approaches are discussed further below.

Architectural Style – the Cotswold Vernacular

D.21 Many Cotswold settlements are quintessential English villages. The distinctive traditional architecture of the area is famous worldwide. Buildings have, for many centuries, had a relatively uniform and consistent style, resulting from the use of the local stone and traditional construction techniques. This is known as the Cotswold vernacular.

D.22 Many new buildings are designed in the Cotswold vernacular style and, if done correctly, this follows a great tradition. The same design approach will of course not be applied to all contexts in the District. The decision whether to adopt a vernacular or more contemporary architectural style will depend on the type of development, the site and its setting. Where it is adopted, it is critical that new vernacular proposals are carefully researched and reflect the qualities of the traditional architecture of the area, including materials, proportions and roof forms, as well as the siting, scale and detailed design of features.

D.23 New designs should not draw on existing buildings that have been unsuccessful or have not respected local distinctiveness. Poor imitations of true vernacular architecture should also be avoided. At the same time there should not be blind copying or slavish replication of specific buildings or detailing. New vernacular proposals should be inspired by the best of the past, carrying the key qualities and essence of the Cotswold style, but also utilising new technologies and best practice to address the environmental, economic and social concerns of today.

D.24 It should be noted that the Cotswold vernacular is not entirely consistent across the whole District. There are subtle variations in architectural forms and features, and in materials, that result in areas of differing character, which should again be reflected in new development.

D.25 Some key qualities of the Cotswold vernacular are:

- a. The use of local limestone for walling, and split limestone slates for roofs. Roughcast render is also used, more often in southern parts of the District.
- b. A general simplicity of form and design is typical, often giving buildings an understated appearance, with any ornamentation usually limited to architectural features.
- c. Restricted gable widths, resulting in narrow plan depths to many buildings.
- d. Steep roof pitches, dictated by the use of the stone tiles.

D Cotswold Design Code

Architectural Style – Contemporary

D.29 Original and innovative proposals that reinforce a sense of place and help raise the standard of design generally are welcomed. A contemporary design should make strong local references and respect elements of the Cotswold vernacular, in order to maintain the architectural distinctiveness of the area.

D.30 On many listed buildings, in some prominent locations, or within consistently historic and traditional village and town street scenes, a contemporary building may appear too starkly out-of-keeping. This is more often the case in an area such as the Cotswolds, which has such a strong vernacular. But there are many opportunities to explore a less conventional design approach, and this is encouraged.

D.31 The massing and the elevations of contemporary buildings should usually be broken, especially in historic settings, to avoid overly horizontal proportions and a monolithic or brutal appearance. The scale, modulation and architectural lines of contemporary buildings should respond to their context, for example with vertical articulation reflecting the narrower plots within town centres.

D.32 The use of traditional local materials, most notably natural stone, appropriate proportions, and a high standard of workmanship will help to ensure that contemporary developments are harmonious with their surroundings. There should be an emphasis on simplicity of design, with detailing neatly resolved and of the highest quality.

D.33 In some instances the use of modern, non-local materials may contribute towards a successful contemporary design. This might include the use of more extensive areas of glazing, zinc or copper roofs, or timber cladding. However, obvious local references should still be made.

D.34 Modern design may also facilitate the incorporation of sustainable features more readily than when following a traditional design approach. Key points that relate specifically to the Cotswold context include the use of locally-sourced materials, and the incorporation of heating and energy generation that utilises local resources, for example, woodland products.

Materials and Craftsmanship

Stonework

D.35 The most important, unifying aspect of the traditional architecture of the Cotswolds is the use of the local stone. Cotswold stone is an oolitic limestone that has been quarried locally for centuries and used for walling, roofing and other architectural elements.

D.36 The colour of Cotswold stone varies across the District, from lighter creams and some greyer tones to the south, to deeper creams and rich honey colours further north. It is vital that the colour chosen is appropriate for each locality, when extending or altering existing stone buildings, or when constructing new buildings.

Cotswold Design Code D

D.37 There are various styles of walling stone within the Cotswolds. Many higher status buildings are constructed in ashlar stonework. This consists of straight cut, finely tooled blocks of stone, laid to their natural bed, with very tight mortar joints.

D.38 More commonly walls are constructed of Cotswold rubble stone. This includes some neater squared and dressed stonework, usually given a flatter tooled face. But many buildings are built up in rougher, less worked rubble stone, and some in shallow coursed field stone. Traditional rubble stonework is generally best laid to courses randomly varied in size up through the stonework, but most often consistent in size along the length of each course, avoiding overly wide mortar joints.

D.39 Mortars are traditionally lime based. The use of lime mortar is a requirement in some situations, most commonly on listed buildings. It is also suitable for other traditional structures. Where a more modern mix is permissible, the inclusion of lime, white cement and local sand (including some larger aggregate sizes), is often found to be successful for new rubble stonework. The aim is a mortar that dries to a colour to blend with the stone. The effect should generally be unified stonework, rather than obvious stones amongst mortar. Usually joints are brushed back to give a rougher texture, finished flush or very marginally recessed from the faces of the stones.

Other walling materials

D.40 The use of lime washes and renders is particularly characteristic of southern parts of the District, such as Cirencester and Tetbury. Sometimes rubble stonework is traditionally given several coats of lime wash, in colours ranging from whiter tones to stronger ochres. Lime washes protect stonework and give buildings a distinctive soft appearance, usually continued across architectural elements such as stone mullion window surrounds and hood moulds.

D.41 Many Cotswold vernacular buildings were rendered historically, and in some cases the stonework we see today was never intended to be exposed. Traditionally most renders are of a roughcast type, with a thrown pea-shingle coat, and a lime wash finish. This gives a soft, interesting and locally distinctive appearance. Some buildings, usually those with classical design influences, and typically in town centres, are finished in smooth renders.

D.42 Other traditional building materials also make an important contribution to local character. Some red brick is seen, more commonly from the nineteenth century onwards, and more often in town contexts and for outhouses across much of the District. It was also used more widely to the far north, in the Vale of Evesham, and to the far south east, in the Upper Thames Valley.

Stone slates

D.43 Cotswold stone slates are constructed from limestone, split along its natural bed and dressed to various slate sizes. They are then laid to courses diminishing in size, from the eaves up to the ridge. A steep roof pitch is required. Ridge tiles are traditionally sawn stone, and valleys formed by slates swept to the curve. This widespread roof covering is one of the most distinctive characteristics of Cotswold vernacular architecture.

D Cotswold Design Code

D.44 Artificial Cotswold stone slates are available, and have improved in quality. They are still, however, not the authentic, traditional material. They have a subtly different appearance. They do not fully imitate the visual qualities and variations of the natural material, and do not weather and develop a patina with age in quite the same way. On listed buildings and in some other sensitive historic settings they may not be permissible. But they are appropriate for use on many unlisted buildings and housing developments across the District. A high quality artificial stone slate product, in these situations, gives roof slopes a suitably softer appearance, reflecting vernacular buildings and responding to local distinctiveness.

Other roofing materials

D.45 From the nineteenth century onwards there is more use of blue-grey Welsh slate, for re-roofing, and often for lean-tos and outhouses, town houses and agricultural buildings. Roof pitches are not required to be so steep when using this material. In most contexts, the stone slate (or artificial stone slate) should remain the dominant material in new vernacular developments. Natural blue slate, although a welcomed traditional roof covering, does have a cleaner and harsher appearance.

D.46 Some use of thatch is also seen in the District, most widely in a few of the northernmost villages, but with scattered examples surviving further south. Plain clay tile is seen in some locations, and clay pantiles in the south west of the District, around the Tetbury area, and often on outbuildings.

Windows and doors

D.47 A high quality of materials is expected generally within new development. Slender metal window framing may be appropriate within stone mullion surrounds or within contemporary designs, but windows are generally required to be timber side-hung casements or sliding sashes.

D.48 The framing of casements should be balanced to opening and non-opening lights. Modern storm-proof detailing should be avoided and generally flush casement window construction should be used, with attention paid to achieving slender glazing divisions. Detailing should include plain chamfered external beading, to replicate traditional putty lines.

D.49 Timber doors would also usually be expected. Wider planks are often appropriate for boarded doors. Panelled doors should be of a period style appropriate to the building.

Finishes

D.50 Even the choice of finishes can make a vast difference to the character and appearance of buildings, such as window and door paint colours. The use of stained timber should generally be avoided as it is not a traditional joinery finish and does not complement Cotswold stone. Colours should normally be selected from a fairly traditional palette, but this still allows for wide variety.

Cotswold Design Code D

D.51 The nature and colour of other external woodwork should generally harmonise with the colour of the walling materials. Lintels, posts and weatherboarding are commonly oak. The most sympathetic finish for these features is often completely untreated. The wood then weathers and silvers with time to very successfully complement stone, and assist in vernacular and contemporary developments blending well within their settings.

Boundary treatments and surfacing

D.52 The use of traditional materials also extends to the landscaping surrounding buildings.

D.53 Dry stone walling is of course indigenous to the area and seen widely. Correctly laid walls require a skilled craftsman. They are traditionally topped with stones set on edge (cock-and-hen), but sometimes are given a simple curved concrete capping.

D.54 There are also examples of red brick walls and other boundary treatments, including railings. Painted railings, vertical and set into low walls, are seen in town or village centre contexts, with horizontal parkland style railings often used in more rural settings. Mixed native species hedging can be used as part of a successful landscaping scheme, sometimes planted alongside post-and-rail fencing within agricultural surroundings. Wattle fencing can also be used for screening in many contexts, again sometimes whilst planting is established.

D.55 Modern, incongruous forms of boundary treatment should be avoided, especially in prominent locations. These include close-boarded and other forms of modern timber fencing, concrete block walls or certain types of hedging such as Leyland Cypress.

D.56 Within traditional street scenes and to front gardens lower forms of traditional boundary treatments should be maintained, so as not to obscure the frontages of buildings and result in uncharacteristic high enclosure to the road. Privacy should be established using planting.

D.57 Paving is traditionally limestone, or Yorkshire, flags. Stone cobbles, blue engineering bricks and other traditional setts are commonly seen. And crushed limestone or bound gravel can also be sympathetic surface finishes.

Craftsmanship

D.58 High levels of craftsmanship will be required to use both modern and traditional materials appropriately and to ensure high quality developments are delivered. It is often the detail and sensitivity of the work that makes all the difference in achieving a successful outcome. Skilled craftsmen are also often able to repair historic features, avoiding the need for more extensive replacement of fabric.

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	Development proposal	Key considerations
		<p>k. In sensitive locations garage doors should be side hung, vertically boarded and given a suitable (usually painted) finish. In new housing schemes the style and finish of garage doors should at least imitate this traditional appearance.</p> <p>l. There should be adequate space for manoeuvring of vehicles, but overly wide visibility splays and sweeping drives should generally be avoided. For more modest properties, entrances should maintain a more low-key appearance.</p> <p>m. Large stone piers, finials and ornate gates should be avoided, unless the access is for a high status building. High solid boarded gates may also not be supported where these are considered uncharacteristic or they block important views. Often timber field gates or other traditional, low, open gates, set simply within low stone walls are most appropriate.</p> <p>n. Only minimal openings should be created in front boundaries. Traditional enclosure, such as walls, railings and hedges, should be maintained and not removed to establish off-street parking.</p>
3.	<p>New build houses in the Cotswold vernacular style</p> <p>The design and materials used should reflect the key attributes of the traditional buildings of the area, whilst providing energy-efficient and liveable modern homes.</p>	<p>a. A mixture of house types, including a good representation of terraces and semi-detached, with only some detached. A layout that is generally not too regimented and achieves interesting street scenes, with active frontages and attractive open spaces.</p> <p>b. Simple and traditional forms, with limited gable widths, plan depth often being achieved through rear gabled 'additions'. Steep roof pitches.</p> <p>c. Cluttered fenestration and over-scaled window openings should be avoided. Windows should be well spaced and generally centrally placed within gables, with a hierarchy of opening sizes. Gable end walls blank or with limited offset openings.</p> <p>d. Use of natural local limestone in sensitive locations and high quality artificial stone elsewhere.</p> <p>e. Stone of an appropriate colour to the locality.</p>

Cotswold Design Code D

	Development proposal	Key considerations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> f. Usually rubble stonework, laid to random but consistent courses. Mortar of a good colour match to the stone, with a rough texture, brushed back flush. g. Some use of high quality through-coloured render, of a roughcast texture. h. Natural or artificial stone slates to roofs, laid to diminishing courses, with some use of natural blue slate. i. Some use of other traditional walling and roofing materials may be appropriate, depending on the site and its location within the District. j. No bargeboards to verges or fascia boards to eaves. Exposed rafter feet avoided. k. The inclusion of chimneys, built up in traditional stone or brickwork, and set flush to gable end walls. l. Dormers and porches of traditional design. m. Doors and windows recessed into the walls of the building. n. Appropriate colour stone facing lintels, to the depths of the reveals. Alternatively oak lintels, left untreated to silver. Stone or stone tile sills. o. Flush timber casements, with balanced opening and non-opening lights, slender glazing divisions, and attention paid to traditional external detailing. Sliding timber sashes. p. Slender metal casements within stone mullion window surrounds. q. Front garden areas traditionally enclosed by natural dry stone walls, and some railings. r. Traditional stone (or occasionally brick) boundary walls separating rear gardens from streets. s. Sensitive boundary treatments to outer edges of housing schemes, avoiding close-boarded fencing and including sufficient landscape buffers.