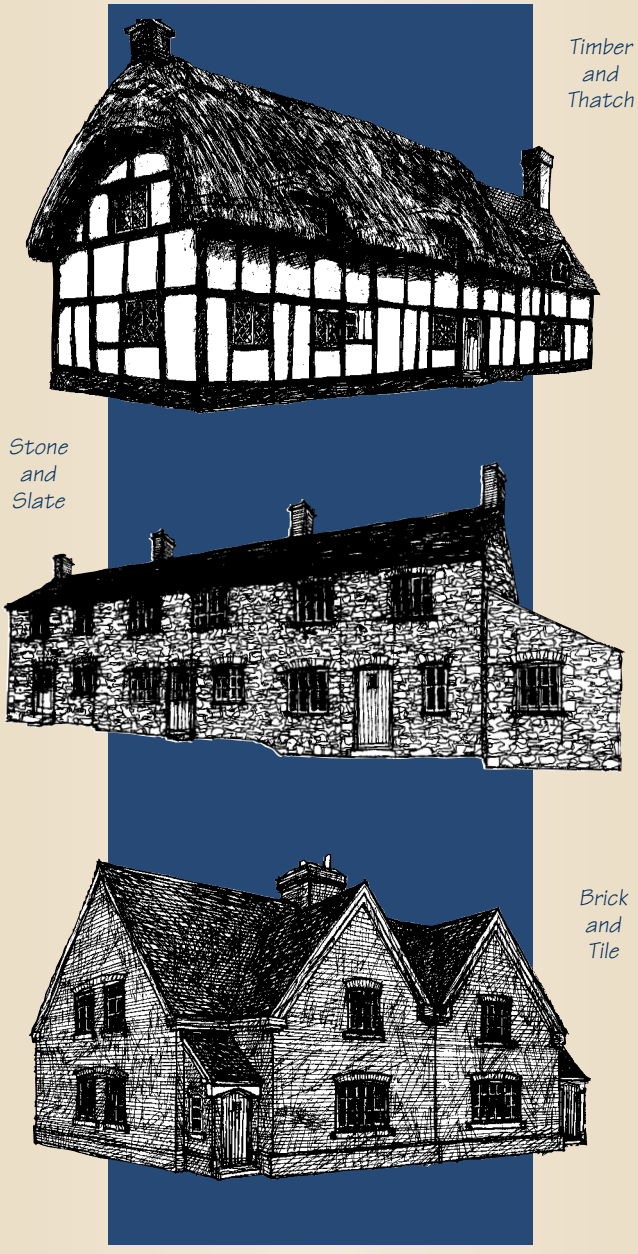
Design Guide

AYLESBURY VALE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Building Materials



For advice on planning applications :

call 01296 585679

For advice on building control queries :

call 01296 585460

Adopted by the Council on 16th January 1995 following public consultation

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AYLESBURY VALE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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1 Introduction:

This guide is intended to help people applying for planning permission understand the Council's attitude to building materials. Materials can be as important as design in determining the appearance of a new building.

The guide is not mandatory and each case will be assessed on merit. However, context can demand compliance with main points; for example, edge of settlement locations, prominent sites, Conservation Areas and areas of landscape importance.

The Council has committed itself to maintain local identity and rural association through the choice of those materials, which enhance established character.

The guide applies to all development work, whether new build, alteration, extension, repair or minor change and to all categories of development, industrial, commercial or residential.

2 Advice:

Planning Officers are available to advise on suitable materials, although there is no substitute for good architectural advice. The employment of a Chartered Architect is therefore highly recommended.

3 Statutory Listed Buildings:

The advice in this guide does not necessarily apply to statutory Listed Buildings of architectural or historic interest. The Council's Historic Buildings Advisor will be pleased to give specialist advice on alteration, extension or repair with regard to Listed Buildings, including appropriate materials and their use.

4 Policy Context:

The Council's Local Plan requires an approach to development, which respects the traditional character of the rural landscape, towns and villages. This is supported by policies in the Structure Plan and Planning Policy Guidance issued by the Government.

5 Application of Guide:

There are three circumstances where natural or "handmade" materials may be insisted upon:-

- On Listed Buildings or for buildings adjacent to Listed Buildings where it is necessary to respect special character or the setting of Listed Buildings;

- On buildings in the countryside that are within Areas of Attractive Landscape (AAL) or Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB);

- Within Conservation Areas and on prominent sites adjacent to a Conservation area.

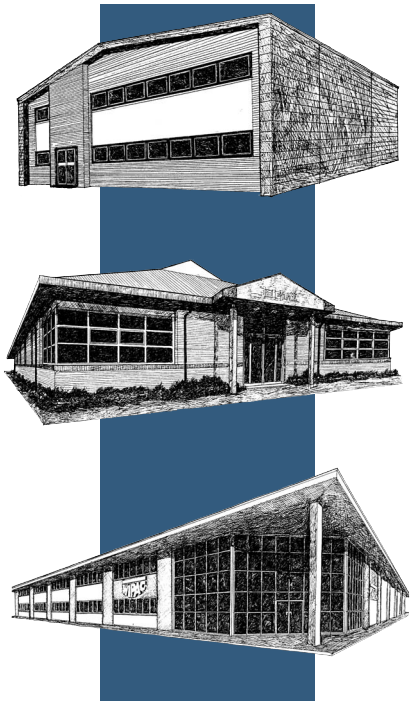
6 Local Character:

In the past, the use of particular materials was localised, determined by availability and limited by the difficulty or the expense of transportation. Over the years, many individual settlements achieved an association with locally derived materials, which now helps provide distinct identity. Indigenous materials give a sense of place, continuity and permanence, which can assist, in assimilating new development.

7 Modern Materials:

There is no presumption against modern materials, wisely used; new materials have a place. There are examples of commercial and industrial buildings in the District that owe their success largely to the skilful use of modern materials, in these instances, high quality modern materials were employed. New products should however be permanent and capable of ageing and weathering in an attractive way.

In special areas, where there is an historic context, modern materials are often less satisfactory unless selected to complement, or otherwise be compatible with existing traditional building materials, particularly those which give local character or identity.

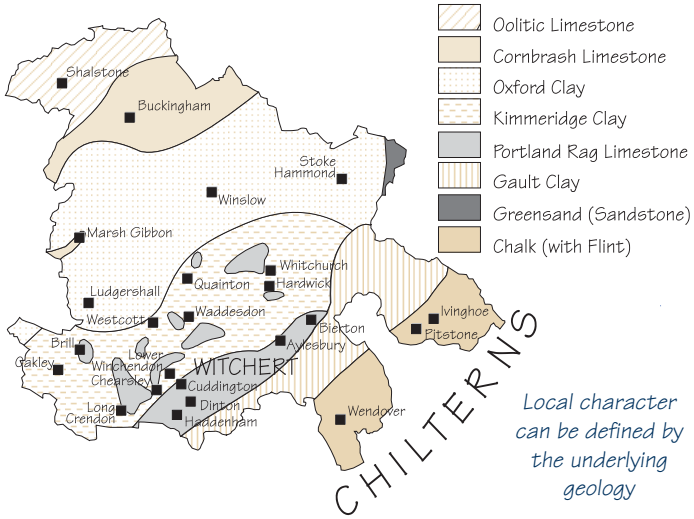


Innovative commercial buildings are associated with quality materials

8 Concrete Products:

Concrete composites weather differently from naturally derived materials such as brick, witchert, stone and timber. The use of cement render, concrete products e.g. bricks, blocks and tiles, do not always provide satisfactory weathering performance or compatibility with other materials used in the locality.

Concrete based materials can be subject to colour fading, patchy or differential weathering and staining. In considering materials, the Council is aware that buildings may well last hundreds of years and planning officers will therefore wish to be satisfied about the long term implications of agreeing materials containing concrete.



Local character can be defined by the underlying geology

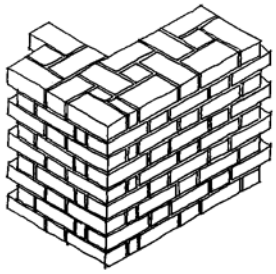
9 Plastics:

In a traditional context, plastic products may be inappropriate. Plastic cannot be painted, it can dull, and it is often different in colour and texture and will not develop the same patina of age as suitable timber or tiles. Metal rain goods are better suited to historic contexts and dark coloured plastic rain goods are often more suitable than lighter colours.

10 Bricks:

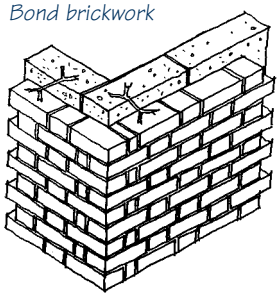
Bricks are the most widespread traditional building materials in Aylesbury Vale. Typically characteristic are locally derived relatively smooth faced and warm coloured, red/orange and red/brown bricks.

Parts of the Vale are still strongly associated with a predominance of local brick. Examples are Brill, Hardwick, Whitchurch and Waddesdon. Brickyards in the Quainton/ Westcott and Pitstone area produced a distinctive light yellow (Gault Clay) brick found in domestic buildings nearby.



Traditional Flemish Bond brickwork

Simulated Flemish Bond brickwork



Stretcher bond brickwork is associated with modern cavity wall construction; however, there may be instances when simulated Flemish bond is required using snap "headers" (half bricks). Flemish bond better complements an historic context.

11 Mortar:

The correct brickwork mortar mix is as important as choosing a suitable brick. The recommended mortar mix for an historic context is 1 part lime putty to 3 parts sand. Lime is preferred to cement because it allows the masonry to breathe, accommodates movement and is of traditional appearance.

For stonework, the colour and texture of sharp, gritty sand should be appropriate to the type of walling, as stone requires mortar which echoes its colour and texture.

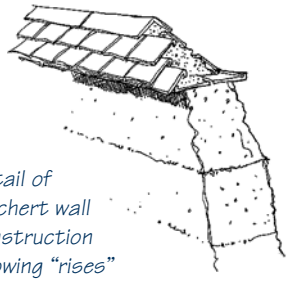
Mortar mixes on stone or brick surfaces using a concentration of cement are not aesthetically acceptable. For normal use, a recommended mix is 1 part lime and 3 parts sharp washed sand. For exposed walls, copings and bottom courses, hydraulic lime facilitates damp resistance.

Stone and brickwork requires careful pointing for new work on older buildings. Pointing should be flush jointed, brushed back to expose the aggregate; a slightly recessed joint can be used with frost resistant bricks (FL Quality). Proud (ribbon) and weather struck pointing is to be avoided, for aesthetic and practical reasons.

12 Witchert: (Also spelt wychett)

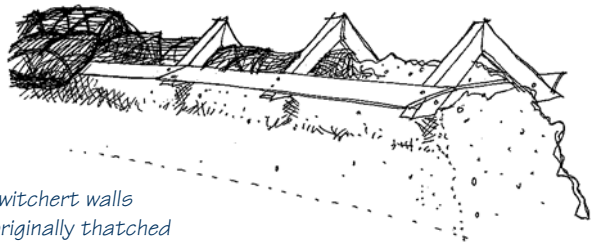
This is found in the vicinity of Dinton, Lower Winchendon, Haddenham, Long Crendon, Chearsley and Cuddington, as far north as Ludgershall and as far east as Bierton. Witchert is a naturally occurring mixture of clay and chalk which, when mixed with chopped straw and as little water as necessary to achieve a malleable substance, is built up in layers (or rises) on a stone or rubble footing (grumpling).





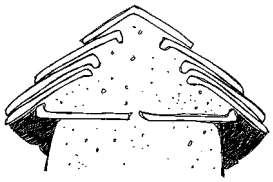
Detail of witchert wall construction showing "rises"

Witchert is susceptible to erosion and needs weather protection by a clay pantile coping and a lime plaster or lime wash over vertical surfaces. Originally, witchert walls were thatched and some have old plain tile copings, pantiles being a later tradition.



Many witchert walls were originally thatched

Lime putty mixed with sharp sand is the most suitable material for witchert repair, but there are specialists who can either reconstitute or prepare witchert for reconstruction of damaged walls.



Arrangement of plain clay tiles to protect the material below

The conservation of this unique form of construction is important, and the use of cement based products for witchert repair or replacement is inappropriate.

A traditional witchert house



13 Render:

Traditionally, lime render was used as a repair or protection to brick, stonework and witchert walls. Render composed of cement and sand, but without lime, can appear uncompromising; it is also susceptible to cracking because of its intolerance to movement and will trap moisture, the greatest enemy of historic buildings.

For historic buildings a traditional lime render gives greater flexibility and if left unpainted or just lime washed acquires a mellow effect. Smooth render finishes using a wood float (not steel) or a lime rough cast finish respects the character of the District.

Render should be applied in a minimum of two coats. Aggregate blocks or keyed Flettons (not insulation blocks) should be used for modern structures where the render is intended as they provide a good anchor and avoid showing through after damp weather. In this situation, render should consist of not more than two 12.5mm coats comprising a mix of one part cement, two or three parts lime and nine or twelve parts sharp sand (1.2.9 or 1.3.12).

Alternatively, one coat of maximum 15mm thickness is acceptable and the job specification should include rinsing the wall concerned for one hour before rendering to reduce suction. The sharp sand should be well-graded and of a mid colour.

14 Stone:

Natural stone should be used in favour of reconstituted stone, preferably from matching sources. Correctly, coursed appropriate stone has a timeless quality and will reinforce the character of stone built areas.

Roughly coursed limestone



Rubble limestone with brick dressings

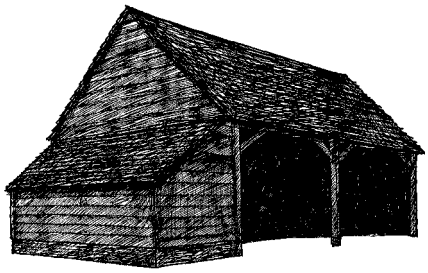


Coursed stone with quoins and stone mullions to windows



15 Timber:

Deep wood boards (225mm) are a traditional feature for barns and out-buildings. They provide an excellent means of reducing the visual impact of garages and for elements of new buildings



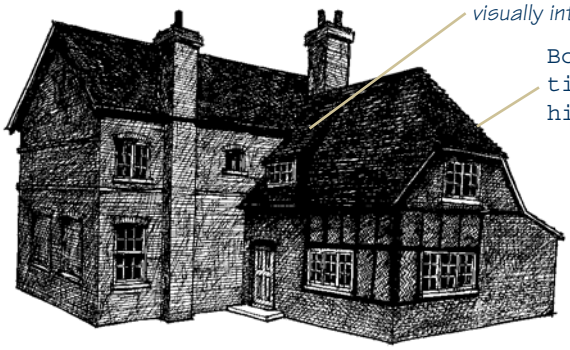
Tar coated timber cladding has a less strident appearance than brick

16 Roofs:

Roof shape, pitch and materials contribute to local identity. In Aylesbury Vale, the use of steep dual pitched roofs in clay plain tiles is predominant on older buildings. Slate and clay pantiles are also widespread roof materials.

Swept dormers are often the least visually intrusive

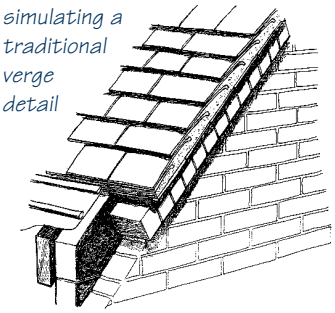
Bonnet tiles to hip



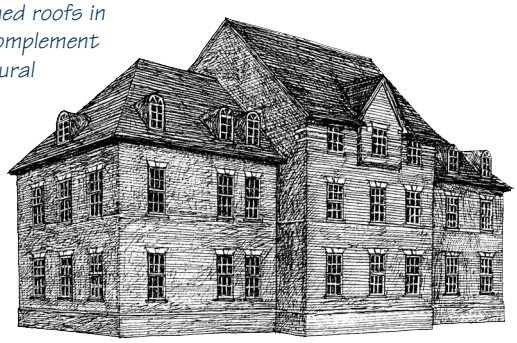
There are in the Vale a considerable number of thatched buildings; long straw is the material most traditional to the area. A change from long straw to combed wheat or water reed or changes to the ridge are not encouraged as it would lead to a loss of local distinctiveness.

Materials used for roofs are associated with different roof pitches. Thatch is rarely laid under a 50° pitch, slate is normally laid between 20° - 35°, clay plain tiles are generally laid between 40° - 60° and pantiles are usually laid at about 40°.

One method of simulating a traditional verge detail



Steep pitched roofs in clay tiles complement the Vale's rural character

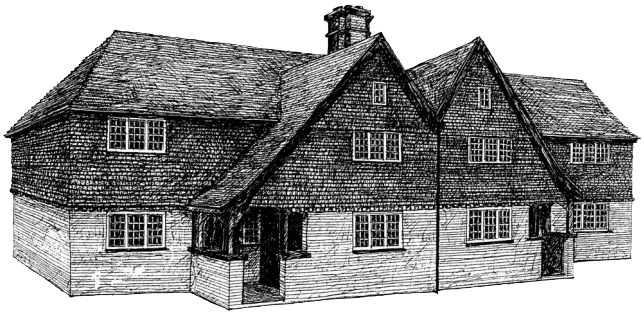


It is important that new roofs of traditional form are not spoilt by modern fitments, for example, stainless steel or galvanised flue outlets, prominent ventilators on ridges, eaves or roof slopes, over-dominant roof lights or unsuitable interlocking concrete tiles. The provision of a substantial chimney stack can be of a visual and practical benefit and can be used to conceal central heating flues or other outlets. Most traditional forms of chimney pots are still in production.

17 Tiles:

Plain clay tiles are preferred for roofs, where roofs are hipped, then bonnet hip tiles are preferred for hip ridges as this gives a complete and harmonious appearance to the roof as a whole. "Handmade", that is, irregular clay tiles which match earlier products, may be required for Listed Buildings or Conservation Areas.

Tile hanging can aid visual integration of houses



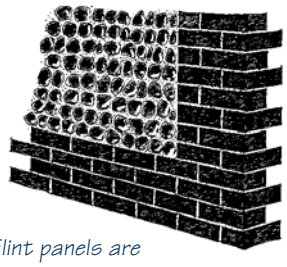
Machine made clay tiles are generally less suitable than "handmade", but these are preferred to concrete tiles. Plain tiles are always preferable to concrete interlocking tiles by virtue of their size and lapped arrangement.

18 Slates:

Natural slate is an acceptable roofing material where clay roof tiles do not predominate. Slate is aesthetically superior to machine made composite or slate coloured concrete roof tiles. Traditional lead rolls or blue ridges are frequently used where natural slate is used in Conservation Areas.

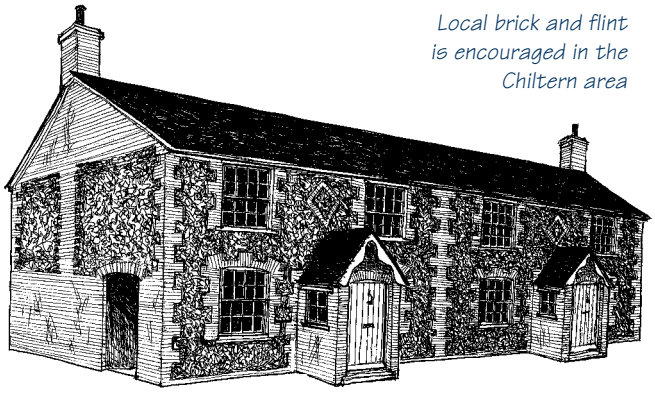
19 Flint:

Flint from the Chilterns and the area west of Wendover is linked with the construction of labourers' cottages and boundary walls. 19th century farm buildings and churches frequently used flint with brick dressing. Flint should be laid in lime mortar. Both knapped and cobbled forms of flint construction are found in the area.



Flint panels are attractive if lime mortar is used

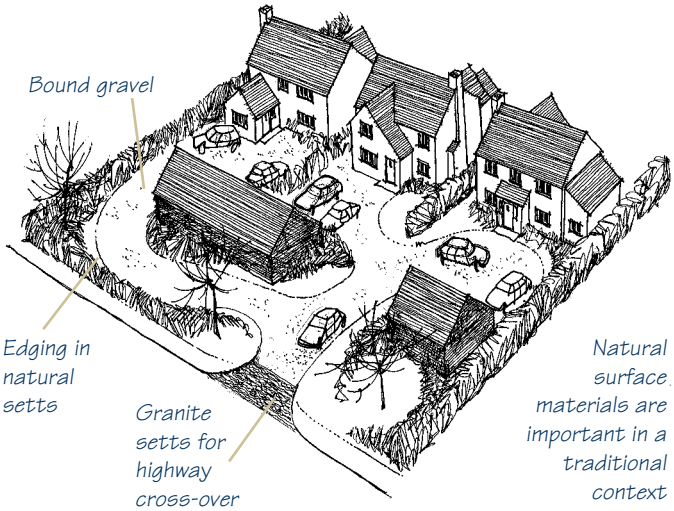
Local brick and flint is encouraged in the Chiltern area



20 Surfaces:

The secret of successful surface treatment is simplicity. Brick, clay paviors, stone slabs, gravel or similar natural materials are recommended for unadopted car parks, forecourts or other hard open surfaces. Pea shingle and concrete setts are not suitable for large areas unless visually broken up with planting.

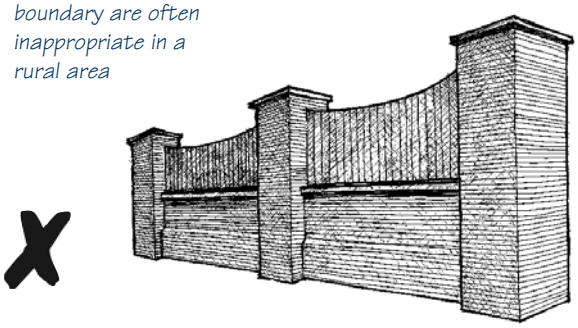
Granite setts are preferred for roadway edges, particularly if incorporated into a dished drainage channel made from setts. In Conservation Areas, setts, granite kerbs, natural stone and clay paviors are preferred. As with brick and stone, "proud" pointing of setts is to be avoided.



21 Boundaries:

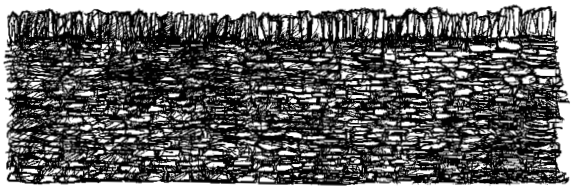
Materials used to construct boundary walls should match or complement those used for local boundary treatment, for example; in an area where stone has traditionally been used for front walls, brick and / or timber will appear out of place.

Suburban types of boundary are often inappropriate in a rural area



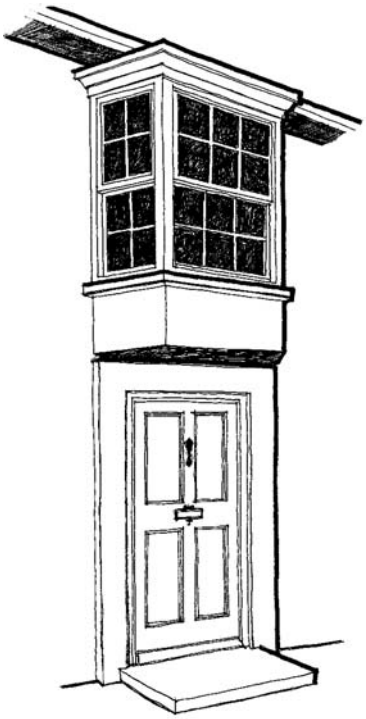
Local stone, native species hedging, estate railings or post and rail fences are most acceptable in rural areas. Brick, metal railings, timber paling and weatherboard are preferred rather than ranch style fences, walls of reconstituted stone, or panel fences.

Boundary materials should suit the character of the area

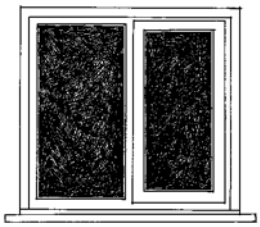


22 Windows and Doors:

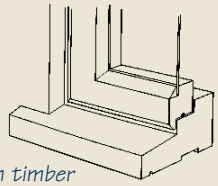
Timber windows and doors of traditional proportions, detailing and construction are preferred. Self-coloured or plastic framed windows and doors will seldom be considered acceptable in Conservation Areas. Painted softwood or indigenous hardwood are recommended window materials although stained softwood may be a less expensive alternative in some locations.



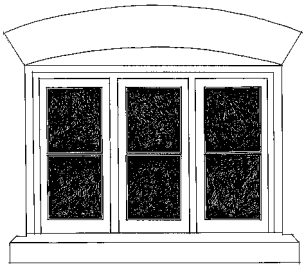
The arrangements of openings are often local features



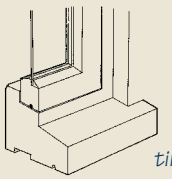
✗ *Modern timber window arrangement of unbalanced appearance*



Modern timber window with overlapping casement and relatively thin cill



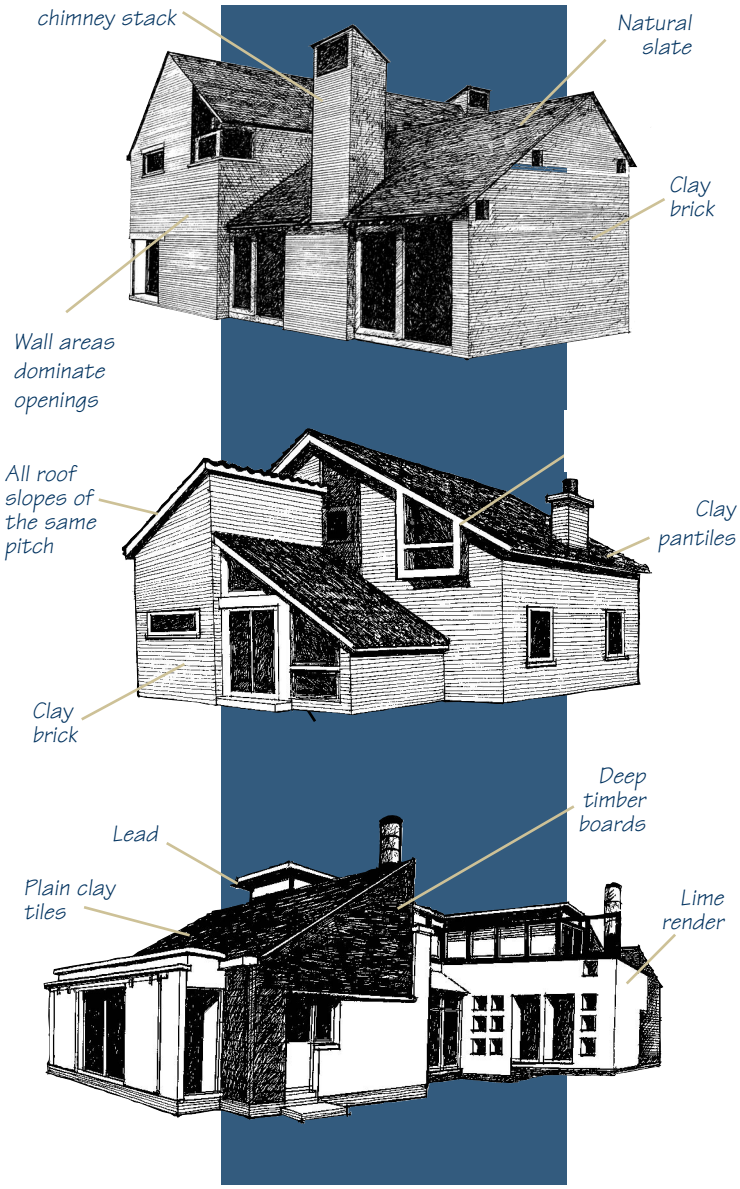
Traditional designs with opening and fixed lights of equal dimensions ✓



Traditional timber window with a flush casement and deep cill

23 Colour:

Strong, but subdued shades are preferred for woodwork on older buildings. Off white or cream tints suits all buildings better than brilliant white, this is particularly true of render finishes.



Examples of modern buildings that use traditional materials

Planning Permission:

In Conservation Areas building materials will usually be considered as part of an initial planning permission and not treated as a reserved matter. This reflects the importance of materials in an historic context. Elsewhere, it is advisable to discuss and resolve the issue of acceptable materials (including surface materials) at an early stage. To assume that the Council will approve a particular product may lead to disappointment.