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# Design Guide



**EXMOOR**  
NATIONAL PARK

to assist those engaged in designing, extending and restoring buildings in the Exmoor National Park



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*Monksilver.*

# EXMOOR DESIGN GUIDE

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**EXMOOR**  
**NATIONAL PARK**

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## Foreword

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Exmoor's buildings are as much a part of the National Park scene as our countryside, woods and coast. This guide is intended to lead those who live or work here to a greater understanding of what makes this aspect of Exmoor so special and to suggest ways in which the best of the past can be reflected in future building work.

As the local planning authority the National Park Committee is keen to encourage high standards of design, and I therefore commend this guide to all concerned with Exmoor's buildings, whether as owners, occupiers, designers or interested lookers-on.

I hope that it will be well read and used whenever decisions about Exmoor's buildings are being made.

**Humphrey Temperley**  
Chairman, Exmoor National Park Committee  
September, 1995



*Exford.*

# INTRODUCTION

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Exmoor became a National Park in 1954, one of eleven extensive areas of relatively wild countryside in England and Wales selected for special protection because of their natural beauty and opportunities for public enjoyment. It has long been recognised that the settlements and buildings on Exmoor are major contributors to the special and unique character of this area.

One of the main tasks of the National Park Authority is to ensure that the contribution made by towns, villages, farmsteads, etc. to Exmoor's local distinctiveness is maintained and improved through the planning process. The NPA also has a role in encouraging awareness and understanding of the National Park's building heritage, through publications, exhibitions and other means.

Since 1954 the NPA has twice published guidance on building design. In the 1950s a pamphlet entitled 'Building on Exmoor' was issued, succeeded in 1977 by a more comprehensive report called 'Building in Exmoor National Park'. Planning authorities are now being encouraged by central government and the Countryside Commission to publish new guidance on design which reflects current planning and conservation philosophies and changes in

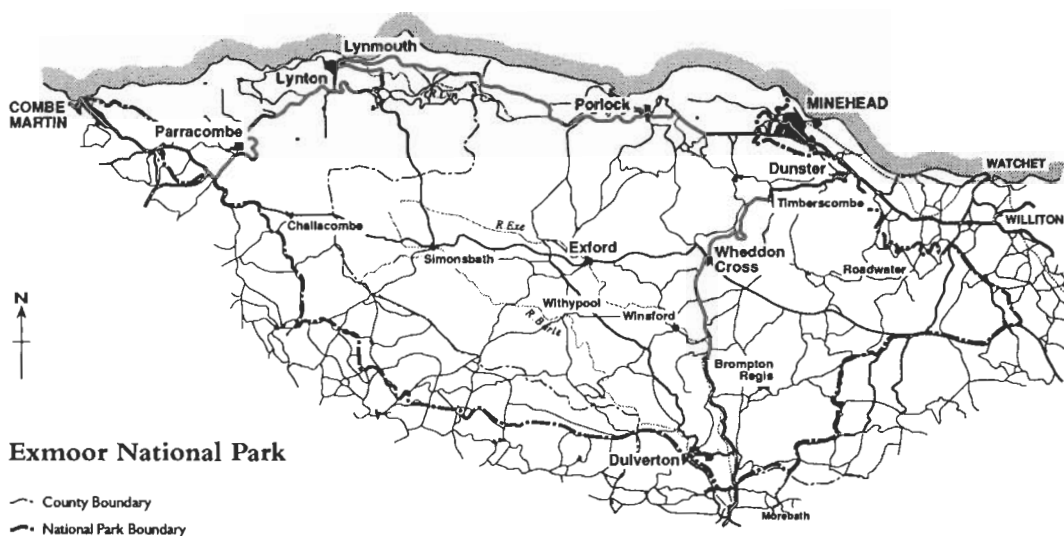
building methods and materials.

This design guide, therefore, replaces previous documents and has been published with three aims:

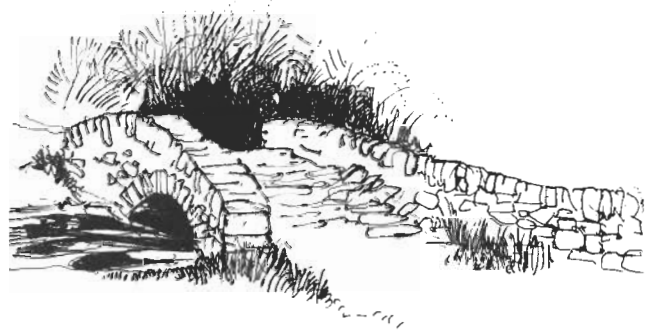
- i) to identify and describe the local distinctive characteristics of buildings on Exmoor;
- ii) to provide specific and helpful advice to designers, developers and householders who wish to undertake building work in the National Park; and
- iii) to interpret the design policies set out in the Exmoor National Park Local Plan.

The guide has been formally adopted by the Exmoor National Park Committee as supplementary planning guidance which means that it will be an important consideration when the Committee reaches decisions on planning applications. It will also be an important reference document in discussions between the NPA's planning staff and applicants and their agents.

The guidance contained in the report is not intended to be prescriptive and inflexibly applied, but the



NPA will be using it as a framework for ensuring high standards of design. The planning staff will be happy to explain and amplify the guidance, but it must be emphasised that applicants should obtain their own independent professional advice – indeed they are encouraged to use architects and other designers who understand and are sympathetic to Exmoor’s building tradition.



*Footbridge at Winsford.*



*Dulverton from the south.*





*Dunster Castle from the Park.*

# 1. THE CHARACTER OF EXMOOR'S BUILDINGS

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## 1.1 Introduction

---

Exmoor is a distinct region with a varied landscape, a strong cultural identity and a character which has developed over thousands of years, composed of many 'layers' - natural and man-made.

In order to locate and design new buildings in this landscape with sensitivity it is vital to understand these historic layers; to work in harmony with the local character and not to destroy it.

The underlying layer is the geology, the structure of the landscape. This in turn is overlaid with a variety of soil types and vegetation patterns. On Exmoor the tilted Devonian slates, shales and sandstones give rise to a predominantly upland landscape.

Steeply incised river valleys and leached soils on the high moors give way to a gentler landscape in the north-east of the park. Here red soils and alluvium have formed the Vale of Porlock and the fertile low farmland sweeping through to Dunster and east to Nettlecombe.

Human activity has added many layers to the natural landscape, but local landform, soil quality, climate, the abundance of water, and the availability of stone and timber have continuously influenced where and how settlements have been created. Neither should the impact of fashion and the individual approaches of owners of large estates, especially during the last 200 years, be forgotten.



*A landscape of deep valleys . . .*

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## 1.2 The Present Day

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Exmoor is a continually changing landscape and it would be absurd to attempt to halt change entirely. At the same time this change, particularly in the latter half of the 20th century, has been rapid and not always in harmony with the character of the

area. As new and widely available materials and techniques have taken over from local traditions, and individual home ownership from the influence of estates, there has been a loss of both local identity and unity in the landscape.



*The picturesque thatched cottage with lime-washed walls, is considered by many to be their dream of Exmoor ...*



*... while in some instances, the reality is somewhat different: Grattons Drive, Lynton.*



*At Dunster ... the narrow street opens out into a ... market place, dominated by the Yarn Market and the Castle (see page 7).*

### 1.3 Exmoor's Character

Whilst the landscape of Exmoor has a distinct regional identity, within the National Park itself the character varies considerably. The cob and thatch cottages of Selworthy and Allerford contrast markedly with the solid slate and rendered farmhouses of the Exmoor Forest. The high walls, orchards and red sandstone of Wootton Courtenay or Dunster are distinct from the Victorian architecture and evergreen vegetation of Lynton. These differences in character reflect local building materials and traditions as well as periods of importance in each settlement's history. Dunster, for example, was significant as a wool town in the 16th century, whereas in the 19th century the coastal resorts saw rapid development.

The design of a new building should therefore take into account its surroundings. Consider the context of the proposed development, look at the existing patterns and layouts of surrounding buildings, analyse the reasons behind their location and how they are constructed. The best way is to walk

around the settlement and make detailed notes with sketches (or photographs) of traditional forms and details. These factors should influence but not necessarily dictate the form and style of the new building. New buildings should be of their time, but should reflect the local traditions and character of the area.



*The interest created by this stone building at Barlynch Farm, near Dulverton, owes much to the interplay between the varied vertical forms and the horizontal lines of the windows and roofs.*



*A fine grouping at Luccombe, where the West Somerset Housing Association has created, in modern terms, a successful and well-scaled terrace of houses that complements the older buildings in the village.*



*Powerful forms and soft lines typify many of the other Exmoor buildings, such as this cottage at Selworthy.*



*The traditional cottage design: central porch, gable-end stack and single storey outshoot can be seen in many areas of the park.*

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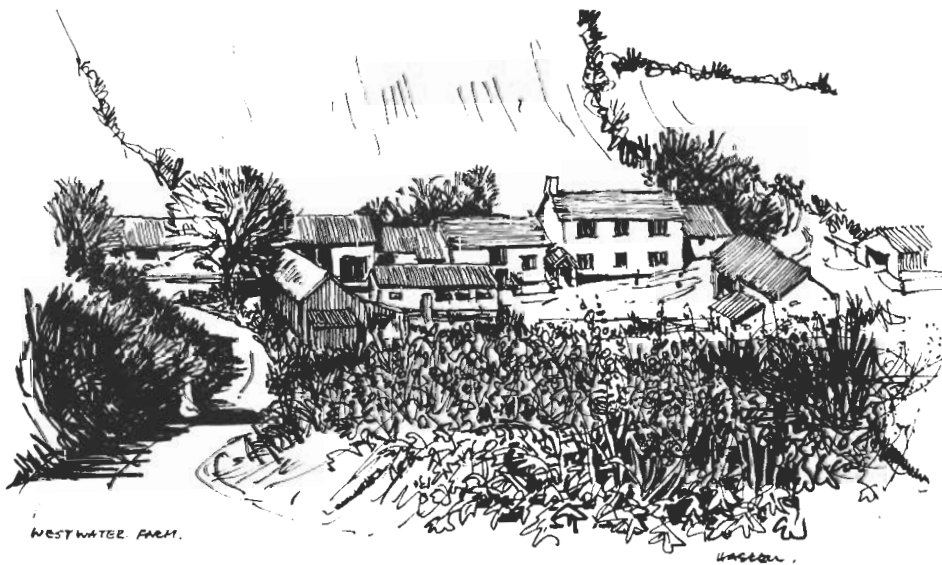
## 1.4 Upland Areas

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The regional character of Exmoor buildings is best seen in the old farmsteads, which were all built of locally found natural materials.

Surface stone has never been prolific on Exmoor and builders had to excavate stone from the ground. It varies greatly in colour but is difficult to cut and work and so walls tend to be made of uncoursed

random rubble-work. The buildings were consequently long, low and rather plain. The harsh conditions also played an important part in the siting of buildings. The farms were set in hollows, sheltered from the gales. Openings faced on to the yards which the buildings enclosed, the house on one side, the barns and shippons on the others, presenting blank walls to the outside.



WESTWATER FARM.

*Farmhouses and their ancillary buildings were built, wherever possible, in positions that offered some degree of shelter and protection in the hills. Here, Westwater Farm, near Hawkridge, is typical of many situated in the valleys.*

### Walls

These early farmhouses were thick walled with big chimneys and chimney breasts, bulging bread ovens and low deep porches protecting the doorways. Windows were small and widely spaced and recessed from the face of the walls. Externally the walls were sometimes lime-washed, white or cream, either directly onto the stone or over a coating of lime/sand render.

### Roofs

Roofs, gabled not hipped, were usually covered with stone tiles and had a very steep pitch between 40° and 50° to the horizontal, with quite narrow roof spans. The stone tiles were thick and heavy. Thatch was also commonly used; the vernacular material is combed wheat reed with a simple butt up (not decorated) ridge. Rainwater goods were not used on thatched roofs.



Since the 19th century, the extensive use of thatch has been replaced by an increasing use of natural slate. In the areas of higher rainfall, slate was a more

satisfactory material in any event, and wide overhangs at eaves and verges ensured good protection to the property.



*Where dwellings were sited in exposed locations - like the old rectory at Exford - an extensive shelter belt of trees was planted.*



*Slowley Farm, near Luxborough.*

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## 1.5 Peripheral Rural Areas

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Away from the upland moor areas – that is north towards the coast, east to the Brendons and south and west to the gentler slopes into Devon – the building character changes.

### Walls

Stone walls with overhung roofs give way to rendered cob or stone walls and roofs with little or no overhang. Also synonymous with Exmoor are roughcast rendered finishes, usually colour washed white. Gutters are fixed directly to the wall-face. Slate hanging was sometimes applied to walls facing the driving rain from the south-west and north-west.

Rounded corners of exposed stone and of lime/sand rendered cob are characteristic of some parts of the park. They withstand the action of rain and frost and are to be seen in chimneys, pillars and sometimes the corners of main walls.

### Roofs

Thatched roofs and those clad in local or Welsh slate or Bridgwater clay pantiles and double Roman interlocking tiles can be seen. Examples of plain tiling are rare, and discretion should be used in specifying these on new buildings.



*The juxtaposition of buildings, barns and boundary walls, as in this example in Allerford, displays the typical sense of enclosure created in many village streets.*

### Other Features

Two-light casement windows recessed into small openings were succeeded in the 18th and 19th centuries by vertical sliding sashes in somewhat taller openings, but the proportion of wall always remained greater than that of the window area. Occasionally, the small upper windows were enlarged to form semi-dormers with a characteristic break in the eaves line.

Paving around buildings and in the yards was of natural stone, sometimes with large flagstones but more commonly with small stone cobbles or pitching. This reinforced the harmony between buildings and surrounding ground surfaces.



*Withypool from the east.*

## 1.6 Villages and Towns

Built in the valleys, Exmoor's larger villages, generally speaking, have continuously built up frontages to narrow winding streets. Subtle changes of direction create a feeling of enclosure. Long views through and out of settlements to the countryside are uncommon. Occasionally, for example at Dunster and Dulverton, the narrow street opens out into a square or market place.

The settlements generally contain small, low ceilinged cottages, usually two storeys high. There was rarely the wealth to sustain master tradesmen on a significant scale, able to aspire to more sophisticated housing forms, although Dunster is perhaps the main exception, with many 3-storey dwellings.

There is no rigidity of pattern in the settlements. Although the buildings are similar in scale, form and detail there are slight variations in the building line, irregularities of height or slight changes of window pattern. These are all the result of local craftsmen applying well tried traditional forms and techniques in familiar materials to a particular piece of ground. They were sensitive to the unique qualities of the site, to a small variation of level or to a change in direction of the street. In the coastal villages one is most likely to find buildings of different and imported styles. On the steeper slopes the buildings follow the contours, as at Withypool and Brompton Regis.

Exmoor villages have developed organically over a long period of time in an unforced, unaffected



*The Yarn Market, Dunster.*



*...sensitive to the unique qualities of the site, to a small variation of level or to a change in direction of the street. This example shows cottages at Dunster.*



*Winsford.*



*Mars Hill, Lynmouth.*

progression. Everything was done in the simplest way using in the main local materials to achieve a pleasing and practical result. Enclosure, informality and a sense of belonging typify these villages.



*Dulverton - a compact urban space, dominated by the church and backed by breathtaking natural scenery.*

## 2 NEW DWELLINGS

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### 2.1 Introduction

---

An appreciation of the heritage which has been handed down to us is most important when considering future development. That is not to say the past should be imitated slavishly, but inspiration should be drawn from it. New buildings should observe the spirit of the old whilst being seen to be of their own time.

### 2.2 Location & Siting

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#### In the Countryside

The National Park Authority's housing policy does not normally allow dwellings to be built in the open countryside. However, in circumstances where an agricultural need for a house in a certain location is proven an exception may be made, but a great deal of care will be needed to site it appropriately.

A badly sited building in an exposed place may proclaim its presence over a very wide area and particularly from public vantage points such as roads and footpaths. It makes economic and aesthetic sense to consider the following points before deciding upon the exact position of a new farmhouse or agricultural worker's dwelling.

- Choosing a plot close to the existing farmhouse will substantially reduce the cost of installing new utilities such as electricity, drainage and telephone and the time taken to reach the property by service operators, such as refuse collectors, school buses or

emergency services. Further, by removing the need for overhead wires and any new access the impact on the landscape beyond the site boundary will be lessened.

- While a site high up on a steep open hillside commanding a panoramic view may have attractions on a hot, still, midsummer day, the Exmoor winter with its strong winds will tend to find construction weaknesses which, in other circumstances, might not have become apparent. It makes much more sense to select a sheltered site where construction and maintenance costs will be less, the curtilage is more easily developed for an all year round garden or terrace and prominence in the landscape greatly reduced.

- Where there are no dwellings or other buildings, taking advantage of existing vegetation and topographical features is much cheaper and more immediately desirable than new landscaping. Chapter 9 discusses this subject fully.



*... it makes sense to select a sheltered site ... and avoid exposed locations for new buildings.*



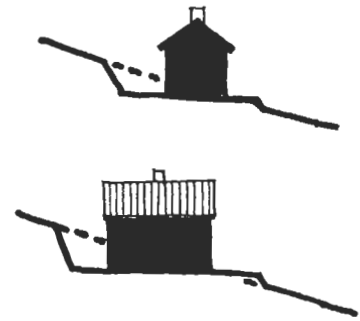
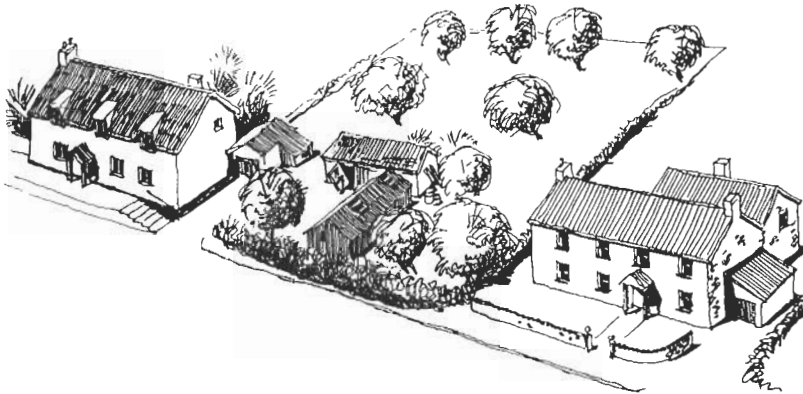
## In Settlements

By understanding and following the basic principles of design used of necessity by previous Exmoor generations developers should be able to complement or even enhance the built environment.

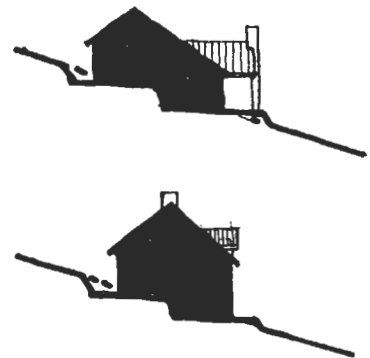
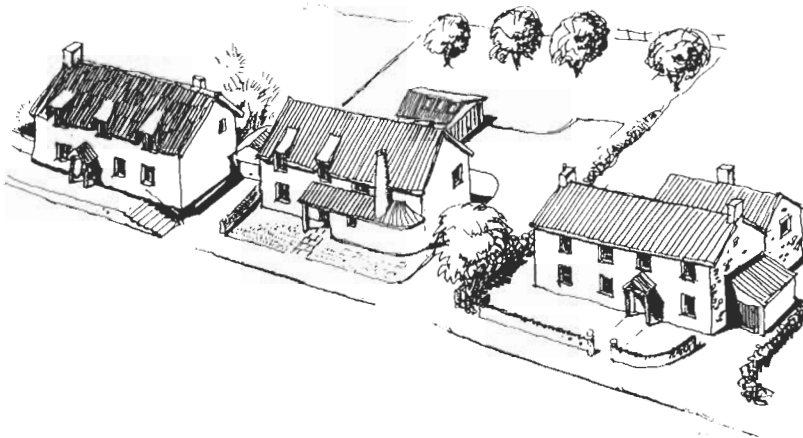
- With careful siting and imaginative plot layout even today's demands for detached and semi-detached houses can be accommodated without breaking up the sense of enclosure so characteristic of Exmoor. However, in certain situations it will be necessary to maintain a continuous built up frontage.

- There are ways of achieving development on a sympathetic scale, either by reducing the depth and thereby the roof height of the building or by creating a 'one-and-a-half' storey house which uses the roofspace with one or two semi-dormers at the first floor. Other ingenious interpretations of the building regulations will be encouraged.

- It is much cheaper to build respecting the natural ground form rather than to fight it by cutting and filling slopes. Settlement patterns evolved for a practical reason and it makes economic and aesthetic sense to continue the tradition.



When building on sloping ground (above) avoid excessive excavations – these are not only expensive but also visually unattractive.



... with careful siting and imaginative plot layout even today's demands for detached and semi-detached houses can be accommodated without breaking up the sense of enclosure so characteristic of Exmoor.



(Left) This new house at Luccombe exhibits many familiar Exmoor features and fits well into the village streetscape.

Respect and where possible exploit the ground slope to achieve interesting house forms: a possible solution (above) could be a split level design, which 'flows' with the hill slope.

## 2.3 Multiple Plot Sites

When new development is proposed, it is often assumed that the higher the density the worse the results will be in terms of private space, privacy and so on. In some Exmoor settlements – for instance Dulverton, Porlock and Parracombe – recent examples of low density developments contrast unfavourably with the attractive, compact and relatively high density of older parts.

Low density development makes uneconomic use of land, especially where sites for housing are generally at a premium, and cannot achieve the visual sense of enclosure or compactness associated with traditional Exmoor villages. Fortunately some recent examples of higher density layouts have demonstrated that, with careful and innovative designs, satisfactory results can be achieved which also promote privacy for their occupants.

Such layouts can have additional economic advantages to the builder and the owner/occupier, where the cost of land and services for such houses is correspondingly reduced.

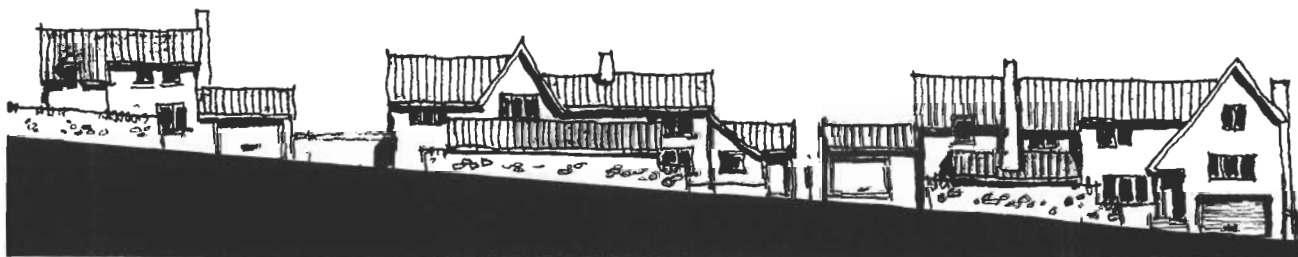
Usually it is the provision of vehicular access and car parking in high density developments that mars an otherwise fine design, and care will need to be taken that such features are as unobtrusive as

possible, allowing the houses themselves to define the space and streetscape.

The use of a mixture of terraced, detached and semi-detached dwellings with walls and garages linking the buildings can help to overcome the effect of buildings floating in an apparently unrelated fashion. For a development to be considered acceptable in a sensitive environment like Exmoor it should avoid the uniform and repetitive forms



*Short terraces of simple design, set to form a pleasing, enclosed space at Brompton Regis.*



*Layouts using repetitive housing units are out of character on Exmoor. Developers and their agents will be urged to adopt an individual approach in their schemes, respecting, where appropriate, site contours and emphasising features sympathetic to the more traditional Exmoor buildings.*

*The top example shows the all-too-familiar appearance of many estate layouts, whilst the lower illustration shows one way of solving the same problem.*

found so often in town suburbs, relate to the ground contours and other natural features and be built of the right materials with a scale and relationship to other buildings in the older parts of the village. The challenge to the designer is to marry traditional densities to the modern requirement for gardens and garages.

Once a good site layout and relationship between buildings has been achieved it is essential that the same design considerations be applied to the details such as rainwater goods or methods of plot enclosure and surface paving – see later chapters.

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## 2.4 Amenities

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There are many standards regarding aspects of housing design relating to the right to light and overlooking of neighbouring properties, accommodation levels, the provision of general amenities and utilities. Some are rule of thumb while others are laid down in building or other regulations, but they are too numerous to be discussed in this guide which is more concerned with the specific design requirements of Exmoor. The local Building Control Officers will have full details of the criteria and will be pleased to give advice. The relaxation of the regulations where this would allow an improved standard of design will be encouraged, where appropriate.

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## 2.5 Wall & Roof Materials

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Natural local stone for walling is not quarried on Exmoor any more and it will be necessary to travel beyond the park boundary to obtain any sizeable quantities. The Local Plan does support the occasional small-scale re-opening of quarries for the extraction of building stone. With such a variety of shapes, sizes and colours of stone across the moor, care must be taken to ensure the choice is suitable for the specific locality.

Even after time has been spent selecting the right stone, the effect can be marred by ill-considered pointing. Stone dust or sand from the same area as the stone will provide a consistent tone when used as an aggregate in the mortar mix and the finished texture should be rough like the stone. The joints should be finished in a traditional manner.



*New house at Bossington.*

Generally, rendered external walling with a pale colour-washed roughcast finish will harmonise well with both the landscape and existing traditional buildings, as will the use of natural roof coverings of slate or clay tiles, depending on the predominant material of the area,.



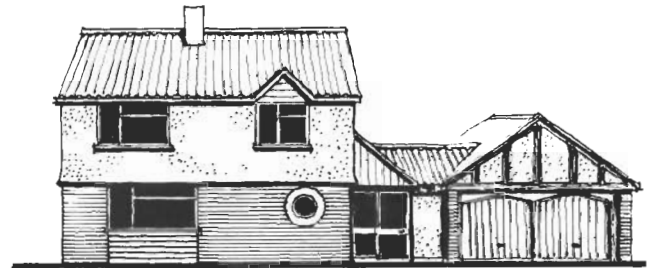
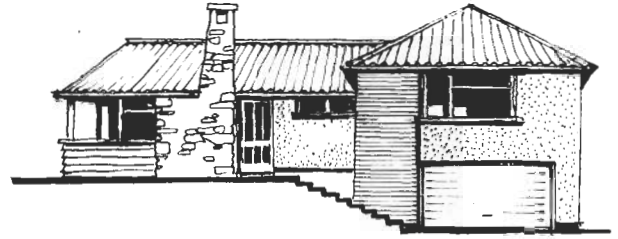
*This stone built public convenience is sympathetic in both form and materials to the locality.*



*The ad hoc use of different materials does little to improve the appearance of this building.*

Although not indigenous to Exmoor, Cornish 'Delabole' slate is popular and suitable. With a range of Welsh, Spanish and artificial slates also widely available it is advisable to seek the advice of the NPA before a commitment to a specific type is made. Thatch is rarely used today, but thatching is a craft still very much in demand for regular repair of existing thatched roofs.

Clay tiling, mainly pantiles and double roman interlocking tiles, were popular in many areas of Exmoor and can be seen today on buildings ranging from dwelling houses to farms and farm out-buildings. They were originally made in great numbers, chiefly at Bridgwater and Minehead, and can look particularly attractive on new building work although it will be necessary to make sure that clay and not slate is the prominent roofing material in the area.



*Avoid designs that rely upon too many different materials and are muddled and unresolved in their form. Traditional Exmoor buildings have, by contrast, simple forms and are consistent in the materials used.*



*Tile hanging at Lynmouth.*



*Slate hanging, is an ideal weathering face against the south westerlies, as shown on this property in Brompton Regis.*



*Thatch is commonly found on older buildings on Exmoor.*



*Double Roman clay interlocking tiles.*



*Lynmouth. Slates ...*

*... and thatch are particularly suitable for covering roofs of buildings that are not a simple rectangular shape.*





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## 2.6 Roof Styles

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Roofs are often overlooked as important design aspects of a building. However their shape, size and colour can play an important role in the appearance, as crucial as any elevational treatment.

This is particularly so on Exmoor, where, due to the hilly terrain, it is often possible to look down onto buildings. In the small communities which make up most of the settlements in the park, a poor roof design will be immediately noticeable.

The pitched roof, whether clad in slate, tiles or thatch, is traditional in the area, and more often than not tends to be gable-ended rather than with hipped ends.

Such gable ends are significant in most streetscapes in the settlements, and designers should be able to use such features imaginatively in their designs.

The moorland weather and availability of materials necessitated thick and heavy slates, with a consequently narrow roof span and an eaves overhang of some 150mm to throw off the water effectively. Away from the wet high moor, the overhang is substantially reduced. The use of these constructional details in new dwellings can be important in successfully blending a building with its neighbours.

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## 2.7 Windows

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The elevational appearance of a building is affected, more than anything else, by the positioning, size and design of its windows.

The traditional proportional dominance of solid wall over openings should be borne in mind and the subdivision of glazing given careful thought.

Timber vertical sliding sash windows and horizontal bar side hung casement windows are still readily available and are, contrary to popular belief, economic to install and maintain. Indeed new research suggests that they may be more cost effective in the long run than UPVC or aluminium equivalents.

Although the tendency today is towards larger panes of glass than was the case in earlier years, a well-balanced design can be achieved. Traditionally, windows were deeper than they were

The use of flat or nearly flat roofs will not be acceptable, as it is considered such features are at variance with the vernacular architecture of the area. The use of dormer windows and rooflights are referred to in Chapter 3.

*Rafter overhangs of some 150mm are advisable in exposed locations, whilst...*



*...fascia boards fixed directly to the walls...*



*... and boxed eaves are not favoured.*



*The dominance of areas of solid wall over openings is evident in many buildings on Exmoor.*



*A typical Exmoor cottage casement window.*

wide. If a wider opening was required, the glazing was divided into separate casements or sashes to give the same vertical emphasis. The key is the subdivision of the window in a symmetrical way with a regular arrangement of areas of glass and thin glazing bars.

Recessing the windows a few inches into the wall and painting the woodwork white will give protection from the extremes of wind and rain while admitting adequate natural light.

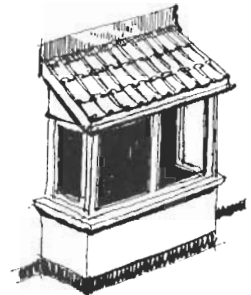
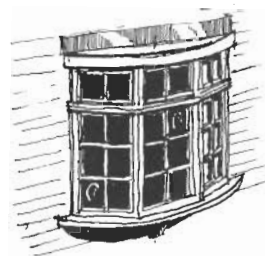
Gimmicky type bow windows, bull's eye panes and artificial glazing arches, will almost invariably look out of place. The use of timber will be encouraged in preference to plastics or metals.



*Deep window reveals as shown in the lower sketch provide better weather protection and give a sense of solidity.*

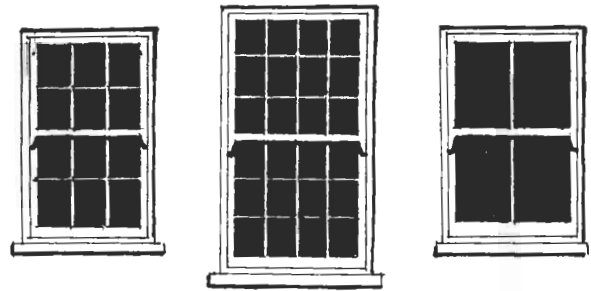


*There are some buildings on Exmoor, mainly built during the Victorian period, that often display flamboyant and finely detailed features, such as these windows on a house at Luccombe.*

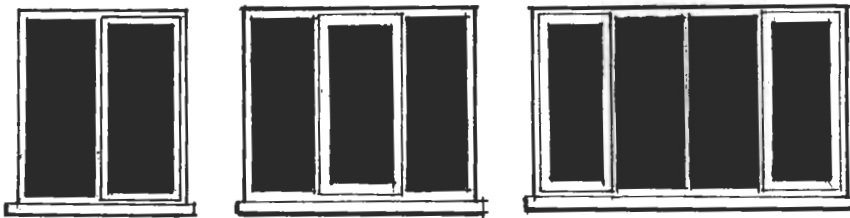
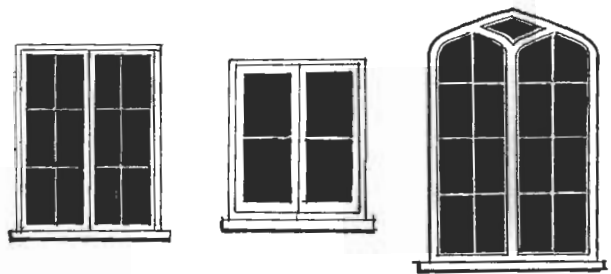


*This type of shallow bay window, with or without bull's eye panes, has no place within the window vocabulary of Exmoor and would not be favoured. If a bay window is required, and, on occasions they can contribute significantly to an elevation, consideration should be given to more positive designs, as shown in the sketch on the right.*

Vertical sliding sash windows, also called double hung sashes, can be seen on many older properties on Exmoor



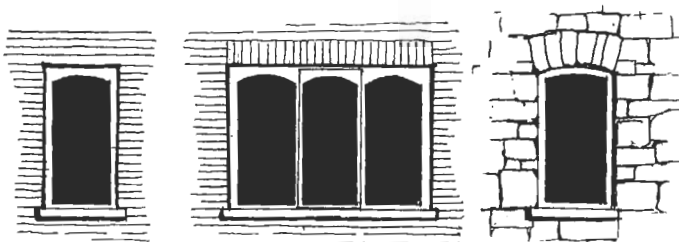
... whilst these are some of the many variants of side-hung casements that can be seen, including others of a more ornate design, like the example on the right at Lynmouth.



Stocked by most window suppliers, side hung casements such as these, with or without a central glazing bar, would be appropriate for most types of new housing and tend to be in sympathy with many present-day Exmoor dwellings. Care has to be taken to ensure that frame and casement sections are not too thin.



Windows with large panes of glass, and picture windows, are uncharacteristic of Exmoor and visually unsatisfactory in most elevations. Top-lights, except for bathrooms and kitchens on rear or hidden elevations, would not be acceptable, although narrow ventilation strips within the top frame would be a satisfactory alternative for other windows. The multi-bar window, would not be suitable, being unsympathetic to traditional Exmoor windows.



The present day vogue for segmentally-arched 'cottage' windows is not considered appropriate for new buildings on Exmoor, unless surmounted by a segmental arch.

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## 2.8 Doors

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The doors of Exmoor cottages are traditionally simple, constructed of vertical boarding and non-decorative. Modern mass produced imitations of period doors (particularly Georgian) might look acceptable in towns dating from that era but they have no place in the vernacular architecture of Exmoor. Porches are discussed in Chapter 3.

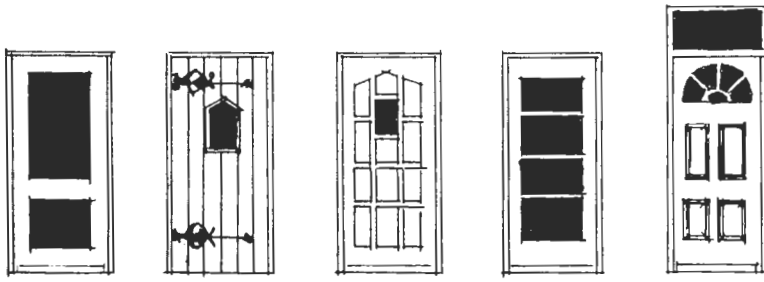
Like windows, front doors provide much of the character to the building; they are the dress front of our houses, seen by every caller and passer by. The temptation to show off with new variations must be resisted where older houses are concerned.



*There are some fine doors and doorways to be seen in and around Exmoor, both in the larger settlements and in the more rural areas. Their craftsmanship still demands our admiration. These examples are at Allerford, (above), and the church garden, Dunster (left).*

*These are some of the many variations of front door designs that can be found in the national park.*





Front door designs such as these should be avoided in both new housing schemes and restoration work. They are uncharacteristic of traditional Exmoor designs and alternatives should be sought. Where appropriate the original door should either be carefully repaired or replaced by a purpose-made replica.

Aluminium and UPVC doors and windows are not suitable as replacements in older buildings, and can immediately destroy any intrinsic qualities a building might have.



## 2.9 Residential Roads and Car Parking

One of the characteristics that typifies the rural areas of Exmoor is the narrowness of its roads and lanes, often bordered on one side or the other by high beech hedges, earth banks or stone walls. In the villages this theme still predominates, while the cottages themselves also add to this sense of enclosure.



In the villages, the lanes are often bordered by earthen banks and stone walls, whilst the cottages themselves also add to this sense of enclosure, as at Withypool (above) and Winsford (right).

Until the turn of this century these road surfaces were of gravel or stone; in the towns, narrow footways were provided, having stone kerbs, and surfaced in the readily available small stones and pebbles of the region.

### Roads

Many of the recent developments in the towns and villages of Exmoor had their road layouts and parking areas laid out to suburban standards,





resulting in a design that was often quite unsympathetic to Exmoor. Today it is certainly possible to draw up road layouts conforming to modern requirements of safety, visibility and construction but that maintain an essentially rural character.

Both Devon and Somerset County Councils, as Highway Authorities, have produced their own design guidance on roads and footpaths for developers which allows for a more relaxed and innovative interpretation of the general standards.

Applicants will be encouraged to relate road layouts sympathetically to their surroundings and, rather than agreeing to schemes that rigidly comply with



*Traditional cobbled footway. Dulverton.*



*Queen Street, Lynton.*



*Modern concrete kerbs and small element paving. The self-conscious mixture of both materials and pattern is interesting, even if a little overdone!*

the general standards of the Highway Authority, the NPA will wish to consider each application on its particular merits. Each circumstance will be unique and the use of appropriate materials and detailing can be vital in securing a scheme which will not detract from the identity of its setting by being too standardised.

The cobbled surfaces of the often narrow pavements add considerable quality to the footways in many Exmoor settlements. This concern for 'floorscape' can be carried through into new developments, where it is possible, by using one of the range of alternative materials that are available today, to add interest to footways and pedestrian priority areas.

### **Car Parking**

Residents' parking is best situated within the dwelling's curtilage, or through the use of an existing ancillary building as a garage. In cases where visitor parking is required, especially on a large scale, strips of stone sets or cobbles can be

useful for demarcation. Elsewhere the use of alternative materials adds interest to surface areas while avoiding large expanses of tarmac. Gravel and local chippings are usually preferable to plain black tarmac. Car parks can blend better into the landscape and their monotony may be reduced with trees and shrubs, both around their edges and within the parking area.



*Unless taken into account in the initial layout, standing space for a parked car on the front driveway can destroy any design quality that the development itself may possess.*

## 2.10 A Few Points to Consider

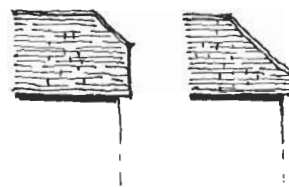
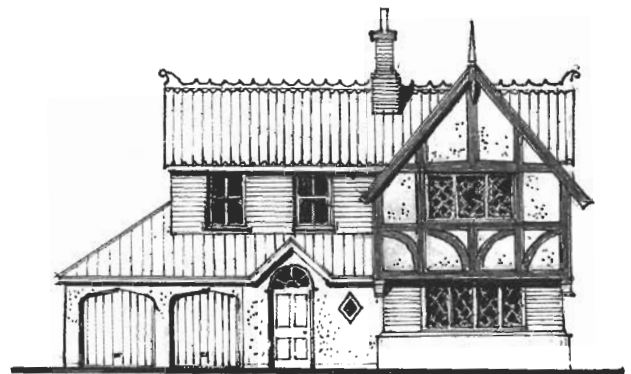
Whilst the form and setting of a new building, or an extension, are most important it is equally necessary to avoid wrong, or ill-suited, detailing which would be uncharacteristic of Exmoor's traditional buildings. These details include gimmicky windows and doors, the selection of incongruous materials, flat-roofed extensions including con-servatories, and insensitively designed repair work.

There should be no need to suppress imagination in designing buildings, but it is necessary to avoid a proliferation of features that owe little to the region.

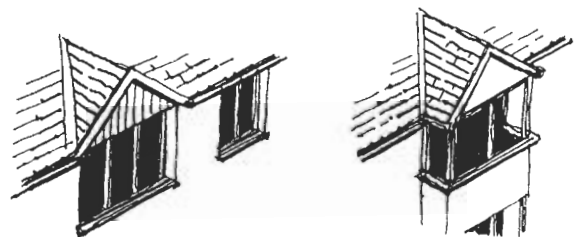
### Basic Design Considerations

- Consider the essential architectural features of the traditional buildings in the immediate area of your new building, and interpret these in the design.
- When building between existing properties respect the size, shape and siting of the adjacent buildings where possible.
- Don't rely on applying images of past architectural styles to 'improve' designs, such as mediaeval leaded lights and applied half-timbering, Tudor styled garage doors and Georgian fanlight front doors. These gimmicks rarely succeed, especially when a combination of styles is used.
- Don't let the design look as if it has been drawn up almost exclusively from a building merchant's stock book.
- Clipped or 'hipped' gable ends should be avoided. They are derived from the detailing necessary for thatched roofs, and traditionally such hips were constructed above the purlin supports. For tiled and slated roofs they appear incongruous.
- Dummy gables may appeal to those trying to improve an elevation but are often unnecessary and would not be considered suitable for new housing. If a small gable is required in order to improve an elevation, then it might be preferable to place it over a small projecting bay.

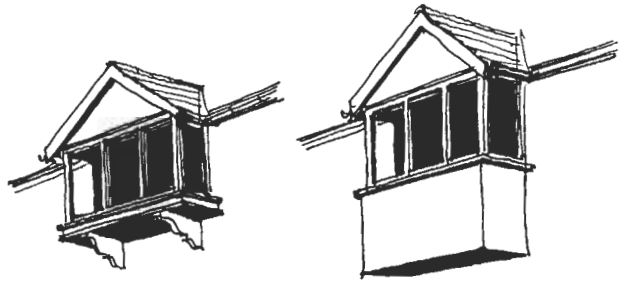
Unless otherwise stated all these sketches are based on examples built close to, but outside, the national park.



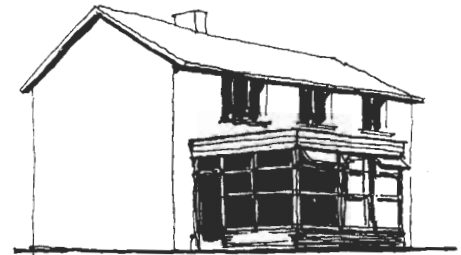
*Avoid clipped or hipped gable ends.*



- If a bay is considered necessary, avoid the tendency (shown left) to project it at cill level, particularly on the first floor, where it will look 'mean' in substance and awkward in use. Far better to project the bay from floor level (right).



- Whilst some glazed conservatories are appropriately designed and would be acceptable on rear elevations others, especially those that are flat roofed, do not fit well with older properties. In many cases these require planning consent, except where they are very small.



### Materials

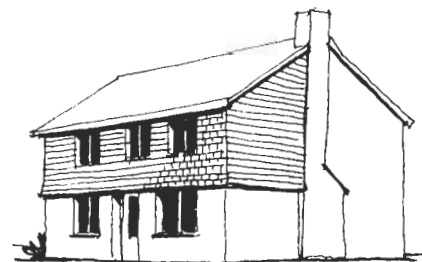
- Don't use materials that are alien to the range of traditional materials to be seen on Exmoor. For instance, brick does not figure prominently in the national park; stone, either natural or lime washed, and render with a colour wash are more typical. Whilst not wishing to debar the use of brick entirely, the NPA urges designers to use this material sparingly.

- Don't use reconstructed stone blocks as these will not be considered a suitable alternative to natural stone.

- Don't overuse applied ornament such as coloured brick banding, infill panels and 'fancy' bargeboards.

- Avoid changing materials at first floor level, thus creating a 'tide-mark' around the building. In a few instances however this may be necessary for constructional reasons, such as cladding a framed structure.

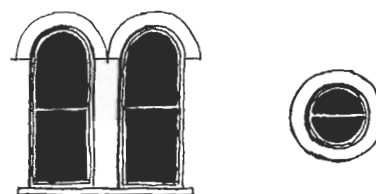
- Tile hanging and ship lap boarding are rarely used on Exmoor buildings and consequently should be avoided unless a feature of the locality. In some areas close to the coast slate hanging is found and this material is encouraged for cladding.



- Resist the current popular trend to strip existing render off old buildings to expose the stone or brickwork underneath, unless professional opinion has first been obtained, as many buildings were originally built to be rendered. For listed buildings and those in conservation areas this work requires listed building consent.

- Apart from a few public buildings, brick arches over windows are seldom seen, and although popular today with some house designers there is little precedent for them on Exmoor. Similarly bull's eye windows would be unacceptable.

- Take care over the treatment of doors and windows. Stained woodwork is not common in local venacular domestic buildings, painting being more appropriate.



# 3 EXTENSIONS AND ALTERATIONS

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## 3.1 Introduction

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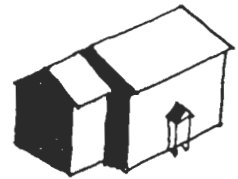
As families expand, and there is a need for additional space in the house, it is often necessary to consider an extension. One solution is to enlarge the 'footprint' of the property itself, if accommodation cannot be fitted conveniently into the roof space.

Unfortunately, many traditional cottages and houses, unprotected by listed status, have had their character destroyed by unsympathetic extensions and alterations.

The altering of an existing building is as demanding of a designer's skills as a new building, and if done well can complement both the building and its surroundings.

There are many ways of extending a property and these are approached individually below. Clearly, circumstances will dictate which is most suitable or practicable for a particular property, but in all cases it is preferable to leave the form of the existing structure intact.

*Make sure the extension does not impair any symmetry of the main elevation. By setting back the extension, this problem can generally be avoided.*

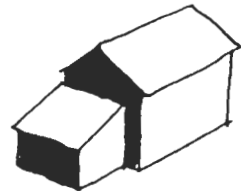


## 3.2 Gable End Extensions

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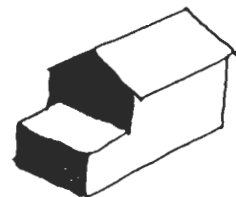
When extending a property sideways, the prime consideration has to be the effect upon the scale and proportion of the existing building, particularly as it is likely to be in public view.

*A small extension roofed like this is characteristic of many Exmoor properties.*



The balance of the dwelling may be upset by a prominent extension. By lowering the ridge height so that it is below that of the existing structure, and by setting the addition back slightly, the original building will retain its dominance. Integrity can also be lost if the extension mirrors the main building but in a smaller way.

*Rarely is a flat-roofed extension visually satisfactory, and alternative solutions should be sought*



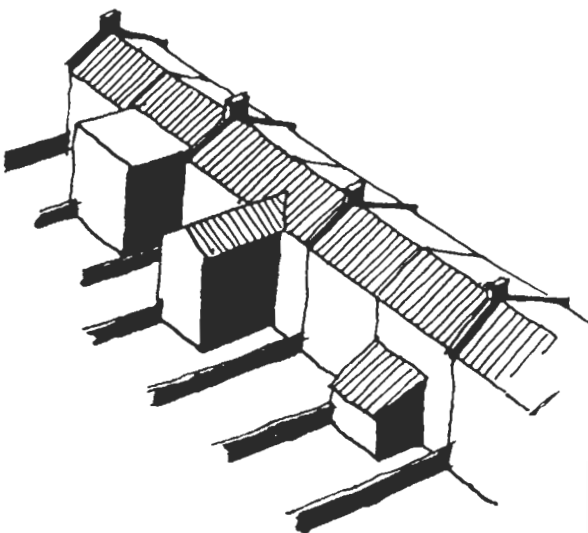
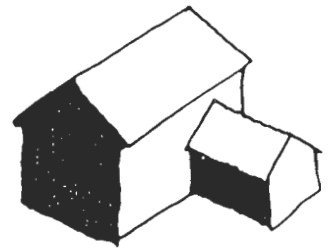
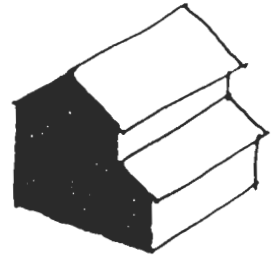
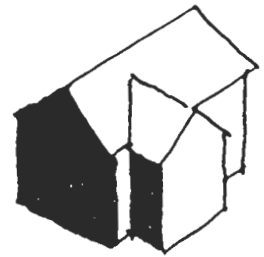


### 3.3 Rear Extensions

Although a rear extension may be hidden from public view a considerable degree of care is required when dealing with one of the main house elevations. Flat roofs are rarely sympathetic and the ridge line generally looks better when it is well below that of the existing building. Careful consideration of the possible effect on the light and privacy of neighbours may help to avoid unnecessary conflict, particularly where the dwelling is semi-detached or forms part of a terrace.

*The three examples, above right, would in principle be acceptable; but would need to pay regard to the proximity of neighbours' property.*

*The example bottom right, a flat-roofed extension breaking into a pitched roof, would not be acceptable.*



*Rear extensions to terrace properties may cause problems over neighbours' privacy and rights to light. Whilst the ground floor extension in the foreground of this sketch might be acceptable, the other two are unlikely to be so.*



*Small extensions, such as these at Withypool, left, and Allerford are visually quite successful.*



*... whilst these show how flat roofed extensions to traditional cottages can look incongruous.*



### 3.4 Porches

Within Exmoor is to be found an almost limitless number of types of porch, ranging from the simple projecting roof to keep the rain water off the front door to the more elaborate version which provides an enclosed porch and even a glazed loggia. An enclosed porch is certainly helpful in keeping cold draughts from entering the house.

Porches can be designed to complement the elevation of a new building, but where one is to be added to an existing house great care will be needed to ensure it harmonises well and is built of similar materials to the original house.

*Withypool. This example is typical of many porches to be found on Exmoor.*

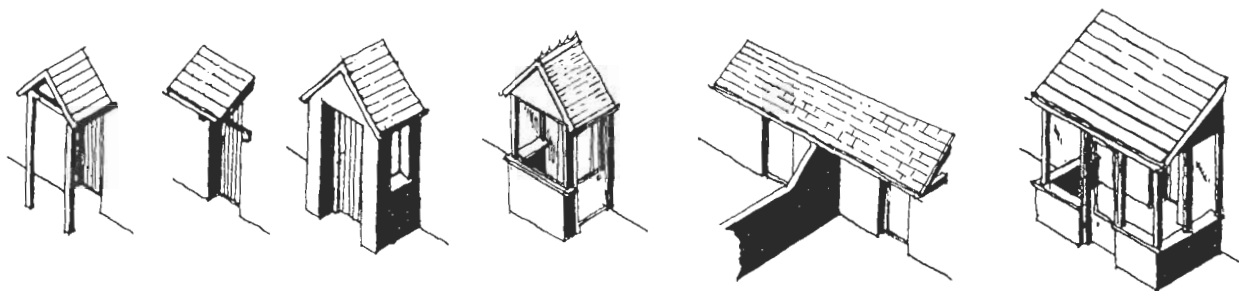


Altering the main elevation needs careful consideration. If the building has never had a porch and the intention to erect one is purely for decorative reasons, then it is perhaps best left alone. If the porch is for functional purposes and is absolutely necessary, constructing it in the same walling and roofing materials as the main house and fitting it with either the original door or one similar will help it to blend in. A comparatively steep roof pitch is best.

In other cases it may be possible to recess the door to form an inset porch. This will retain the appearance of the original building while still serving the intended function.



*In many older properties porches form an integral part of the overall design. This example at Monksilver illustrates how an elegantly detailed porch can add considerable visual interest to the front of the building.*



*Porches – some of the acceptable variations on a simple theme.*



*This new porch has been successfully added to an old cottage, respecting both the slope of the roof and the materials used. The use of secondhand tiles has helped considerably.*

### 3.5 Roof Space and Dormers

Rather than extend a dwelling externally, it is sometimes possible, and more appropriate, to convert the existing roof space into additional accommodation, although it is not usually desirable to raise the roof height.

The consequent need for natural light can often be met by inserting a small window in the gable end, or flush-fitting rooflights of a suitable style and size in the rear roof slope.

It is characteristic of the region that the eaves line is broken by half-dormers and, less commonly, full dormers. These frequently have gabled or hipped fronts, or are roofed to a shallower pitch than the main roof — termed 'swept dormers'. Flat roofs to dormers are not commonly seen on Exmoor properties and designs should avoid using this type, if possible.



*Gabled half dormers and the projecting porch provide elevational interest to this cottage in Winsford.*

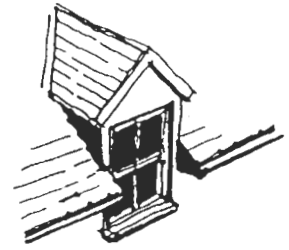


*These swept dormers are a familiar sight in Allerford.*

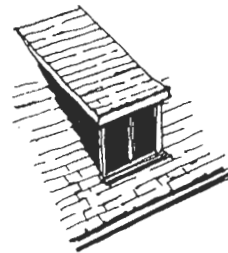
*A line of swept half dormers may help to make a design look 'cottagy', but they can be visually distracting and, with the number of rain-water down pipes required, result in elevations that are unacceptable.*



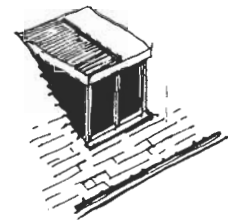
*Gabled dormer.*



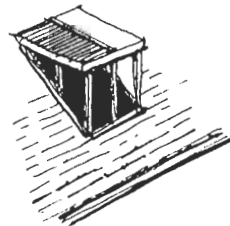
*Gabled half-dormer.*



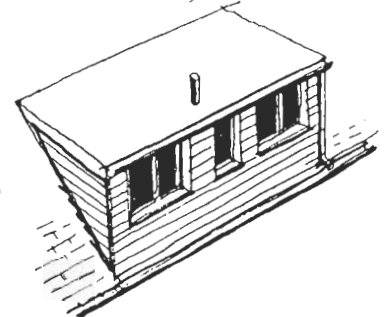
*Swept dormer.*



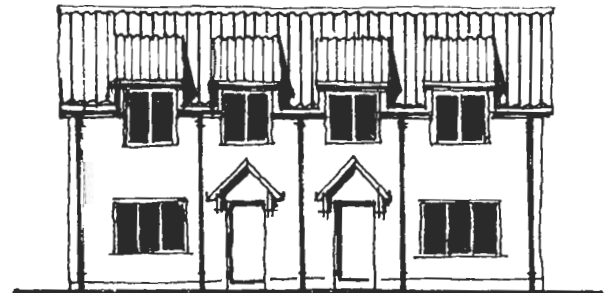
*Flat-roofed dormer.*



*Flat-roofed dormer with glazed cheeks.*



*This is not a dormer but a roof extension. It should be avoided as a means of achieving accommodation in the roof space.*



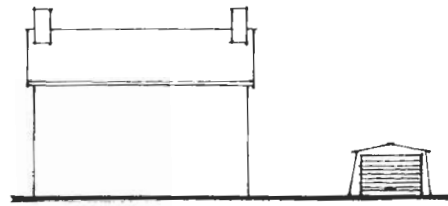
### 3.6 Garages and Other Ancillary Buildings

Although a new garage is often viewed as something that is only going to house the car and can therefore be provided at the cheapest possible price, its impact upon the character of the existing building is potentially as great as any other extension. Prefabricated, detached garages, for instance, almost invariably have a detrimental visual effect.

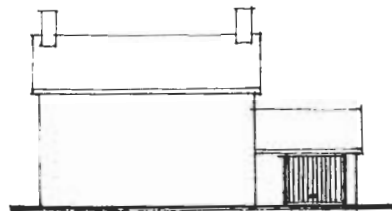
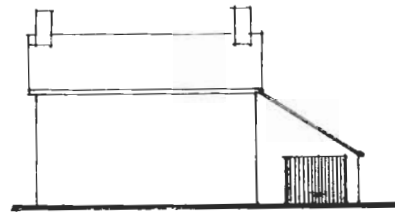
The most aesthetically pleasing and functionally effective garages are usually directly attached or linked to the house and designed like a normal extension, thereby not becoming the focal point of the approach to the house.

Vertically boarded, dark stained timber usually looks best for the doors and even when a metal door is used the selection of vertical panelling in a dark colour can give a simple, yet effective, result. Two smaller doors have less visual impact than one large one where a double garage is proposed.

The treatment of other ancilliary structures, such as sheds, greenhouses, worksheds, looseboxes and swimming pools, requires just as much sensitive care in design and siting. Such features can have a significant visual impact, whether in a village or in an isolated location.



*... avoid this and consider whether solutions such as those shown below might be better.*



*The ground levels have been used to advantage to accommodate this garage.*



*A garage placed at right angles to the main front of the house – like this example in Luccombe – may be a way, if space permits, to reduce the dominant effect such structures can have on the setting of the main house.*



### 3.7 Altering Existing Features



*Don't let this ...* *... become this.*  
*There are many fine buildings on Exmoor — principally from the Victorian and Edwardian period — that are not listed but which, nevertheless, contain features of considerable interest and give a sense of quality to their surroundings. Great care needs to be taken to ensure that repairs and renovations are sympathetic to the original design. The modernisation of doors and windows particularly can often be inappropriate and destroy the character of the building, as can removing cement render to expose stonework.*

Too many traditional buildings throughout the national park have been marred by the replacement of windows, doors, gutters, staircases and other original features by modern, often mass produced, substitutes.

For example, the use of UPVC windows is wholly unsympathetic to historic buildings. The insensitive siting of new additions or the use of inappropriate modern materials can be very harmful. Old buildings should be appreciated for what they are and not forced to become something different; it is frequently not possible to provide the level of modern amenities some people expect without damaging or destroying the intrinsic qualities of the original building both inside and out.

Often, the size of existing openings will not suit the modern substitute and unconsidered enlargement may upset the whole relationship of solid wall to window. It will often cost less and be far more visually satisfactory to have the original window copied or repaired, or to use a simple symmetrical modern window made by a local joiner.

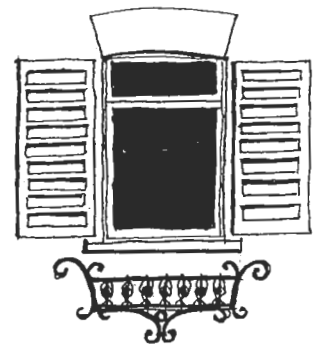
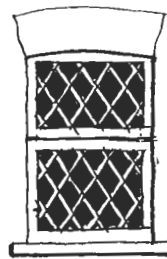
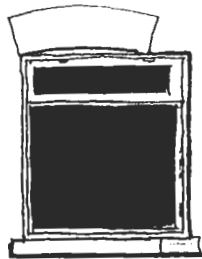
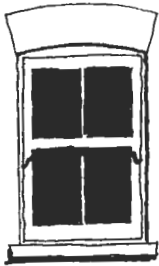
Mock period and 'olde worlde' substitutes are no replacement for the bold, simple doors of Exmoor. Nor is the simple vernacular architecture improved by elaboration with cheap imitation shutters, wrought iron paraphernalia, old gas lamps or other such gimmicks.



*Replacement UPVC windows — the example shown here even has applied leaded lights — are inappropriate in older buildings.*



*These new windows do little to improve the appearance of this older building, and being at the back is no excuse!*

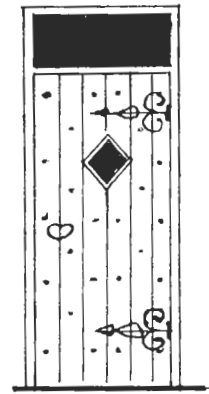
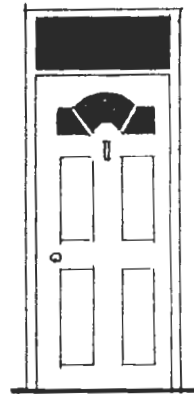
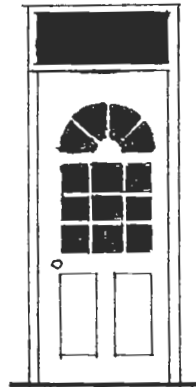
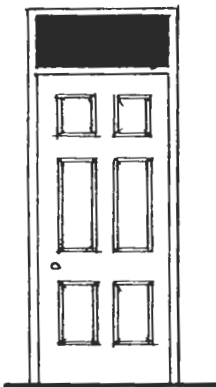


*If you have a window which needs repair, copy the original as closely as possible.*

*Don't do this ...*

*... or this ...*

*... or this.*



*If you have a fine door which needs repair, copy the original ...*

*Don't do this ...*

*... or this ...*

*... or this.*

---

### 3.8 Materials

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It is usually best to use materials identical to those of the original when extending a building. When doing this however care is needed. For example, when extending a natural stone structure it is always a mistake to use reconstructed stone. A more suitable alternative might be a render with a colour washed roughcast finish.

While for walls a complete contrast is usually better than a poor match, this will not necessarily be true of roofs. An extension roofed in artificial slates or concrete tiles will rarely look right attached to a clay tile roofed building. It is much better to use tiles, even though it may take several years for them to become weathered and for the colour difference to vanish.



*The pleasant lime-washed stonework to the left hand side contrasts sharply with the poorly pointed wall to the right ... a form of stonework pointing that is not encouraged.*

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### 3.9 Defining What is Important

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Preserving the character of an old building requires specialist skills. This character is hard to define, being a mixture of historical record, architectural details, eccentric features, examples of the craftsman's skill as well as the effect of weathering and the patina of age. Further, it is very important that skilled craftsmen are employed when carrying out repairs or renovations.

Some buildings already contain extensions and adaptations made by later generations of owners, which, in most cases, adds to the interest of the building. In a few cases, where such extensions are of no particular architectural or historic merit, it might be agreed that their removal would be beneficial to the appearance and setting of the main building.

However, a word of warning! Some buildings that otherwise appear undistinguished, either inside or out, may contain interesting historical features that could easily be overlooked when carrying out restoration or alteration works.



*Impressive ornamental bargeboards give this building an air of quality.*



*There are surprisingly few examples on Exmoor of cast iron ornamentation, bearing in mind its proximity to the iron foundries of South Wales. Where they do occur however, like this balcony railing in Lynmouth, they are particularly fine and are the kind of detail that needs to be safeguarded and restored, as they add so much to the quality of a streetscene.*



*Barn window, Nettlecombe.*



*Classical doorhead, Dulverton.*



*Details such as these attractive window hoods could so easily be removed by insensitive renovation.*



*This doorway, with its pleasing stone drip moulding and ornamental fascia, has survived amidst other less sensitive restoration work.*



*Gable end ventilation to a barn.*

### 3.10 Boundary Walls and Fences

Most areas of the country have their own characteristic forms of stone walling, and Exmoor is no exception.

Such walling, whether mortared or dry laid, has been used for centuries as a means of providing enclosure and defining boundaries. However other forms were also used, such as stone and turf banks and thick beech hedges, which in rural regions also provided weather shields for the animals.

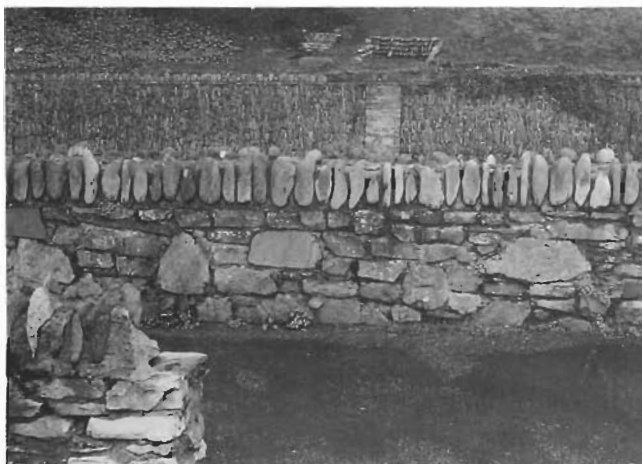
Most of the walls that one sees today were built over a hundred years ago, when rough hewn stone was relatively plentiful for walling purposes. Many ways of laying the stones can be seen, some with flatter, thinner stones, laid vertically or on the slant, whilst nearer the coast other walls have more rounded beach pebbles.



*Here the stone walls make a positive contribution to the quality and setting of this house in Allerford.*



*Left and below: various forms of stone walling to be found on Exmoor.*





Capping the walls can be carried out in a number of ways. Most common is the 'cock and hen' style where alternate large and small stones on edge are used to provide a coping, but brick on edge, specially moulded brick copings and stone slabs can also be seen.

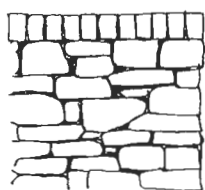
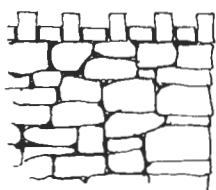
Where dry stone walls have fallen into disrepair their rebuilding is encouraged, and this should be carried out in matching style and materials. Remember that all stone walls on Exmoor are someone's property, and must not be raided for their stone by those wishing to use them for their gardens.

Precast concrete copings, however convenient, should not be used. Neither should a rounded cement capping as this provides poor weather protection and looks unsuitable, particularly on an old wall.

Brick for boundary walls is not generally seen on Exmoor, except in the larger villages and towns, and, where repairs are necessary, these should be carried out in matching materials wherever possible. Cement rendered brickwork for boundary walls is the more popular variant on Exmoor, and for new work it can provide a particularly pleasing solution.



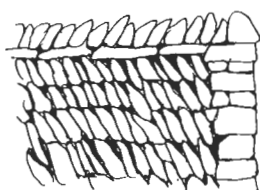
*A stone wall, unsatisfactorily capped with a cement coping, readily reducing any visual qualities the wall possesses.*



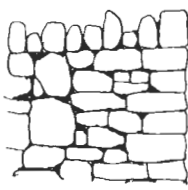
*Two versions of brick coping.*



*Concrete pre-cast coping.*



*Dry walling.  
Herring-bone courses,  
known locally as dyking.*



*'Cock and hen'.*

*These are some of the many versions of stone walling and their copings to be found on Exmoor. The cement coping, shown on the right, is not to be recommended.*



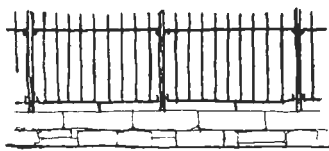
*Cement coping.*

Where stonewalling is often an essential part of the streetscape, particularly in villages, the use of traditional designs and details in new buildings will be strongly encouraged.

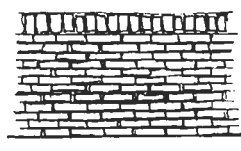
Iron railings bestow a certain dignity upon an enclosure. They can be seen around many public buildings and churchyards, and on some private properties. Although it is unlikely that iron railings will be specified for new housing, where existing railings need repair or replacement, every effort should be made to reinstate such features to a similar design.

Timber fencing, of the simple post and rail version or the palisade form blends in very well with the Exmoor landscape while in some situations close-boarded fencing can be acceptable.

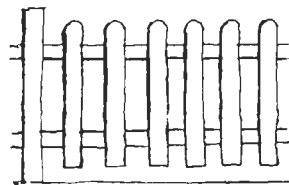
The easy availability of artificial stone products, blocks, concrete screen walling and interwoven fence panels has already spoiled parts of Exmoor's streetscape, where more appropriate materials would have been better. Their use in sensitive areas of the park is not to be supported. The various forms of chain link fencing may on occasions be needed to keep in stock, or for security purposes around industrial or commercial premises, but in domestic locations they look incongruous, unless softened by the planting of beech or thorn hedging.



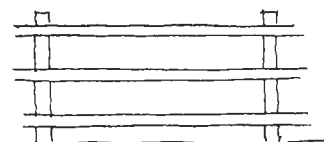
*Iron railings set on a stone plinth.*



*Brick wall with brick-on-edge coping.*

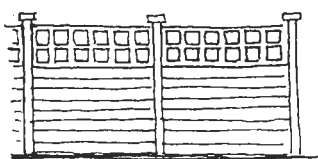


*Timber palisade fencing.*

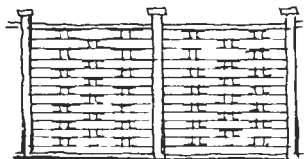


*Timber post and rail.*

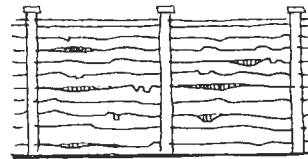
*Types of walling and railing that, might be appropriate in the national park, and (below) other types of fencing that would not be favoured, particularly where visible from a public street or at the front of a property.*



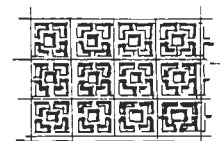
*Timber fence panels.*



*Interwoven fencing panels.*



*Waney edge panels.*



*Concrete block decorative screen walling.*

# 4 NEW AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS

## 4.1 Introduction

Until the second half of this century farming methods in the national park remained virtually unchanged; the traditional practices that had been used for over a century persisted, with the result that farmsteads remained largely unaltered and the barns were adapted only as and when necessary. This has resulted in buildings that, today, readily harmonise with the landscape.

The last five decades however have witnessed considerable changes in agricultural practice with a consequent increase in field sizes and the erection of larger sheds for the accommodation of a range of farming stock and machinery.

Many activities now tend to be concentrated within the shelter of one or two large structures of wide span, covering a vast single level floor area, and usually constructed of off the peg materials to a standardised design. Consequently, the size of these buildings has a great impact on the immediate landscape, particularly in hilly areas such as Exmoor.

The redundant stone barns are often left unused, and this in itself causes the NPA much concern, for some use can often be found, such as incidental storage or even as camping barns for hikers, in order to keep the structures sound and weathertight.



*For centuries, farm buildings were constructed simply and economically, and took advantage, if necessary, of any slope of the ground.*

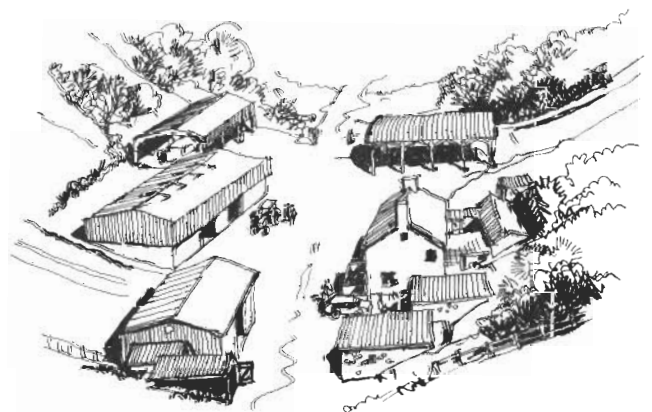


*Lyncombe. Showing a large span barn structure, set amongst more modest sized traditional buildings.*

## 4.2 Siting

When siting new buildings close to groups of existing buildings, it is necessary to ensure that the new construction will not dwarf the others. This does not mean that new buildings should not be near to the older farm buildings, thus helping to create a satisfactory farm grouping, but the contours of the land may mean that greater care will be needed to overcome any apparent overpowering that could result. Siting close to existing groups minimises the impact on the open countryside and ensures efficient use of the building in terms of servicing.

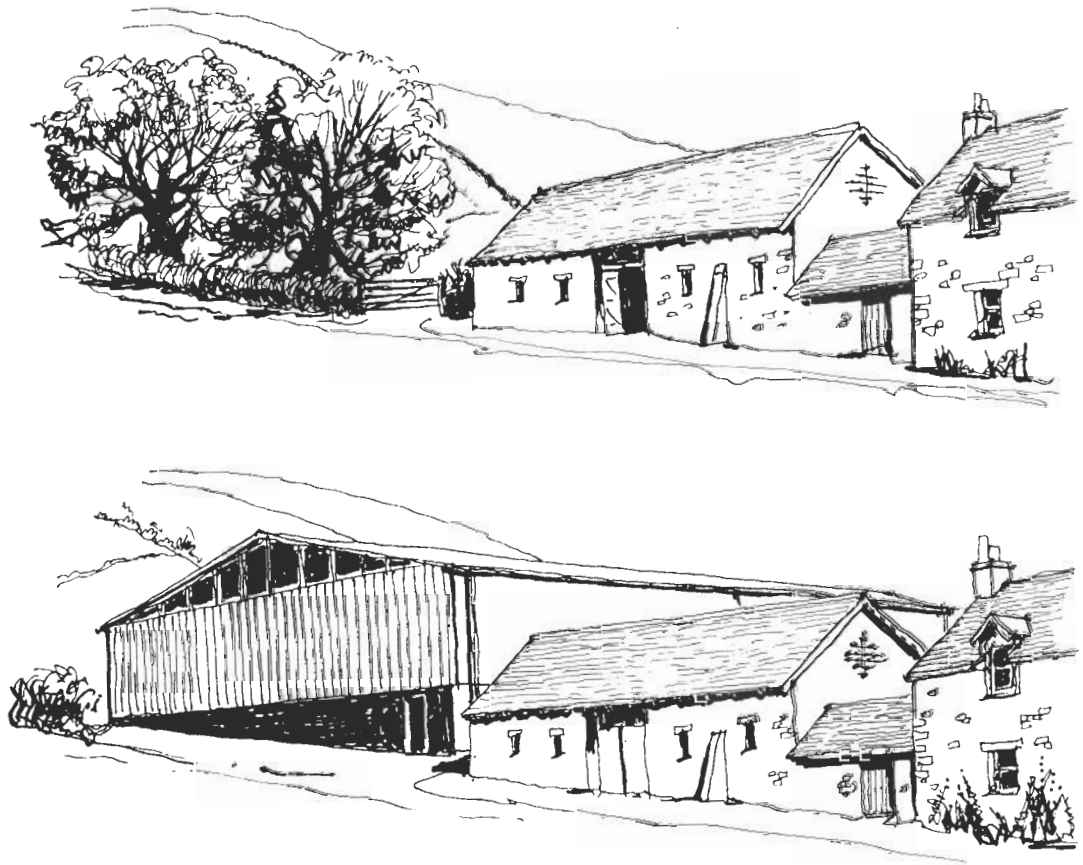
If the ground chosen for the site of a new structure is sloping, it helps to reduce its impact if the eaves and ridge are parallel to the contours, and the opportunity is taken to use tree screening where possible.



*Agricultural buildings grouped together and set along the contours to minimise excavation, thereby reducing their impact on the immediate location.*



*On the hill farms in particular, where shelter from the prevailing winds is necessary, the various barns are grouped to form an enclosed courtyard. This example at Red Cross Farm, near Brompton Regis, is typical.*



*The greatest care is needed in siting large new agricultural structures close to the smaller traditional farm buildings. This illustration shows the extent to which the scale of the surrounding area is affected by the construction of these large buildings in the countryside.*



*These stone barns are dwarfed by the later buildings although the lean-to in the foreground helps to reduce the effect a little.*



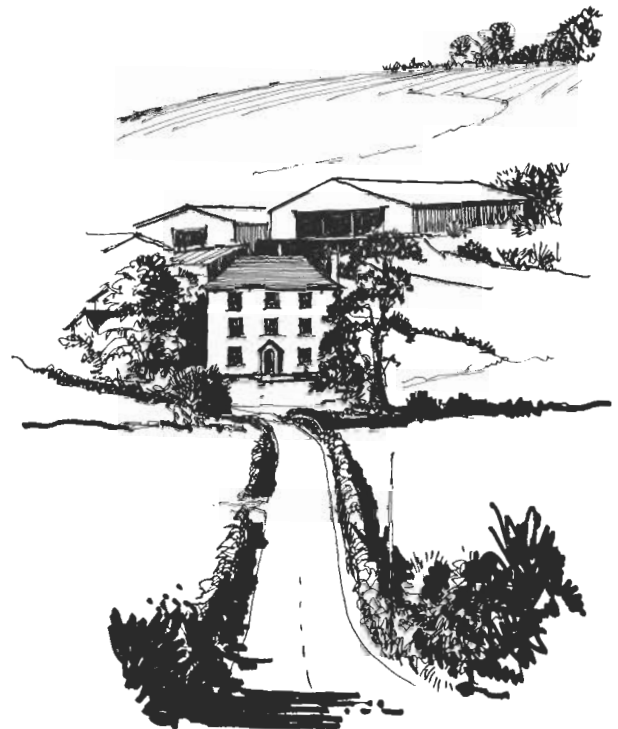
*Avoid siting farm buildings on the sky line ...*

### 4.3 Form

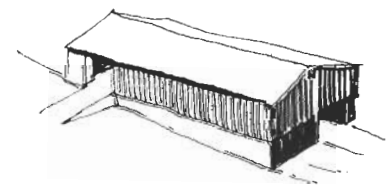
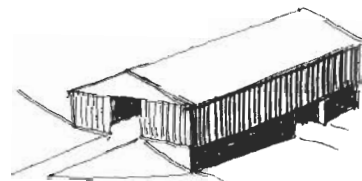
On sloping sites, the scale of the building can be broken up by stepping the roof line where appropriate, which can have the effect of reducing extensive, bland roof areas, while taking advantage of natural ground slope to reduce excavation costs. Where the building is part of an existing grouping, it will help to reduce its dominance. A reduction in the span width and an increased pitch would help to make the large buildings more compatible with



*Most barns to be found on Exmoor possess strong and unpretentious shapes, well-suited to their locations.*



*... or where they visually overpower the older buildings. In this example, while the new barns are some distance away from the main farmhouse they still appear to dwarf it, especially from this viewpoint on a popular tourist route.*

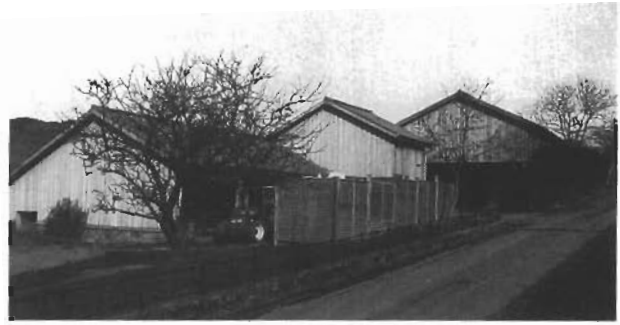


*New agricultural buildings should take advantage of any slope in the ground ...*

Exmoor's traditional farm buildings. It may also be helpful to provide generous eaves which, while being a thoroughly practical design feature for exposed upland buildings, will also cast deep shadows, helping to reduce the apparent bulk.



*Lee Abbey, Lynton - modern farm buildings. Their bulk has been broken down into smaller units, with the result that they fit well into the sloping site.*



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## 4.4 Materials

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For economic reasons it is not usually possible to erect new farm structures using the traditional Exmoor materials of timber and stone, but there are some relatively inexpensive modern materials which can help blend buildings into the landscape. Natural timber cladding will generally look better than profiled metal cladding.

Pale or glossy colours are best avoided as they reflect light and are generally resistant to weathering. Darker colours, particularly dark grey and brown, are usually most suitable and will not conflict with traditional building materials where grouped together with them. Light coloured roofs may be appropriate in certain circumstances, where the building is seen against the sky, although it would be preferable to avoid such locations. Contrary to the general perception, the colour green

does not generally blend well with the natural shades of green in the countryside and should be avoided wherever possible.

Further improvement can be made by varying the colour of the plinth from the cladding above. The former may, for example, be of natural stone, brick or blockwork, while the latter could be Yorkshire boarding which has been pre-treated to a dark colour, or stained to the same effect. A fibre cement sheeting roof will soon blend into its surroundings as it takes on a growth of lichen.

Although the openings on modern farm buildings are usually restricted to doors, these are generally very large and care should be taken to ensure that they are clad or painted in a dark colour, preferably matching the rest of the building.

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## 4.5 Landscape works

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While tree planting or earth-mounding is useful in screening a building, it should not be seen as a means of disguising a poor standard of development. Generally, the use of a densely planted shelter belt of native tree species (see Chapter 9) is most practical, although on occasions single specimen trees or groups can help to break up the massing of a large structure.



# 5 RURAL WORKSHOPS

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## 5.1 Introduction

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The demand for new, purpose-built industrial units has been minimal on Exmoor, but when they are proposed it is important that careful consideration is given to the potential impact on the landscape and on neighbouring land uses. There is however room for modern innovative design and use of materials in such buildings. It is much more likely that new industrial workshops will be created through the conversion of existing buildings. This subject is covered fully in Chapter 7.

## 5.2 Buildings

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For new workshops, storage or light industrial buildings in the countryside or in small settlements, the principles of design are much the same as for agricultural buildings (see Chapter 4). Scale is important. The bulk and form of a unit can be lessened by breaking up the roof pitch, while dark grey or brown roofs harmonise more readily with the landscape. At ground level, large areas of unrelieved tarmac for car parking and delivery areas are best avoided and should be broken down into smaller spaces by the use of planting. Where a new unit in a village is close to residential properties, screening with trees can be beneficial, as can the orientation of the building to shield operational and traffic noises from neighbours.



*The village smithy was a small local industry well founded in history. Here, in Allerford, the work now involves steel fabrication and vehicle and agricultural repairs.*



*Small workshop units can often pose problems of design and scale when located within towns and villages. Here, the Woodside Craft Centre in Lymouth uses projecting gabled entrances to reduce the impact of the building in the narrow street.*

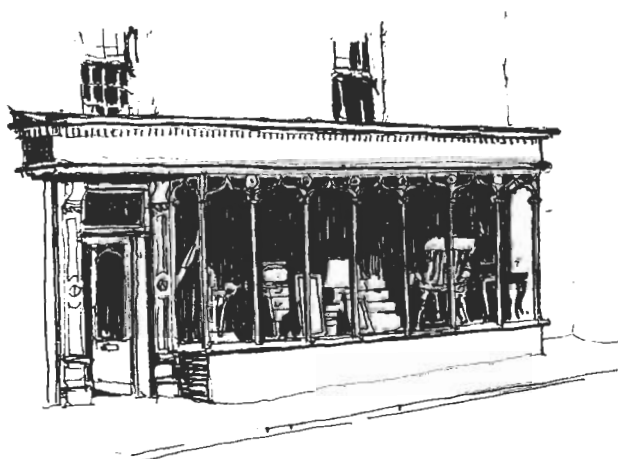
# 6 SHOP FRONTS AND ADVERTISEMENTS

## 6.1 Introduction

Shop fronts or advertisements that fail to respect the existing architectural features of a shopping street can easily mar its overall visual quality and even detract from the appearance of adjacent buildings.

Unfortunately, today some of the older shop fronts have already been replaced by stereotyped designs, often ill-suited to the buildings themselves, and the Park Authority are anxious to reverse this trend and to retain those that possess distinct qualities.

Although new and innovative designs are not discouraged, the insistent corporate advertising techniques seen in larger retail centres will almost always be inappropriate in the sensitive settlements of Exmoor.



## 6.2 Alterations to Shop Fronts

As most shops and small business premises on Exmoor were originally cottages there is still a great consistency of form and scale, and most shop fronts complement the overall design and scale of the building.

While modern, purpose built retail units can satisfactorily accommodate large plate glass display windows set in a deeply recessed fascia, the insertion of these in an existing building is likely to ruin its proportions. Instead, the retention of pilasters, the provision of timber mullions and a narrow fascia board will help to protect the vertical emphasis.

Occasionally, a shop operates from two or more adjacent units. Retention of the vertical emphasis of individual buildings is best achieved by keeping the original divisions distinct.

Timber doors, window framing members and fascias are much more pleasing to the eye than aluminium or perspex equivalents. Existing friezes and pilasters should be retained where possible and new fittings which match the design and materials of the existing building or its neighbours will usually look best.



*There are many fine old shopfronts in and around Exmoor which display a quality of design that is often lacking in modern shop front design. Every effort will be made to ensure these are retained wherever possible and their removal would not be recommended.*



*Well proportioned and pleasing shop front, Dulverton.*



*Where a shop ownership extends over two or more properties, (top right) avoid the temptation to redesign a fascia over the whole width. This destroys the vertical division of the buildings and can often affect architectural details as well (right).*

## 6.3 Advertising

Advertisements are necessary for the economic welfare of businesses and can enhance the street scene when handled well. On the other hand, a plethora of ill-considered signs can have an extremely adverse impact on an area's character. There are many means of advertising and each of these is considered separately below.

### Forecourt Signs

There has been an increasing trend in recent years to display A-boards outside shops and cafes to draw attention to commercial services, goods for sale or other services available at the premises. Far from attracting extra business the cumulative effect of too much advertising can lead to unsightly clutter which may discourage potential customers. A well



*Free standing advertisement panels. Their positioning on forecourts and pavements may cause some problems for pedestrians.*

maintained property with perhaps flower tubs or window boxes will be more pleasing to the eye and will be more likely to encourage customers to enter the building. Remember that it is illegal to display private signs on the public highway, which includes the footway, because they can be a hazard both to pedestrians and drivers.

### Hanging or Projecting Signs

Timber projecting signs that have been hand painted will almost always look better than a modern substitute made of plastic. Installation of hanging signs no higher than the fascia will help to restrict retail advertisements to a consistent level in the street scene.

### Box Signs

Shopping streets in larger town centres are frequently dotted with perspex boxes projecting from the elevation, often with internal illumination. These will normally be inappropriate in the historic settlements of Exmoor.



*Internally illuminated box signs ... are inappropriate in the historic settlements.*

### Fascia Signs

The most appropriate and distinctive place for a shop to advertise its name and business is on the fascia board above the window. Hand painted lettering, preferably light on dark, is most suitable. Alternatively, pre-prepared lettering mounted flush with the board may be appropriate, provided that non-reflective materials are used. Generally, lettering that is projected more than a couple of inches from the fascia will detract from the elevation, while a lettering style of exaggerated proportions will have the same effect.

### Illuminated Signs

Where illumination is absolutely necessary, the best option is subtle lighting of the window display from within the shop. Alternatively, discreet external trough lighting of the fascia can be acceptable (as in the case of public houses or hotels which need to advertise at night). Any form of internal illumination is usually considered unacceptable.



*Pole signs such as this at the Royal Oak Inn, Winsford, are traditional features in our historic streets.*

### Pole Signs

Although traditionally associated with hostleries and inns, these are usually seen today at petrol stations. A single sign on such premises is acceptable, but unfortunately there has been a trend in recent years for three or even four illuminated boxes to be mounted on each pole. In order to protect the street scene it is better that the advertisement of services beyond the brand name be positioned on the building itself. These in turn should be limited to those that are absolutely necessary.

## Sunblinds and Canopies

Retractable canvas canopies such as those that are traditionally placed over butcher's or newsagent's display windows serve a purpose, and are perfectly acceptable, often complementing a building and adding to the attractiveness of a shopping street.

On the other hand, a clutter of unnecessary sunblinds or canopies, whose sole purpose is to advertise the premises to which they are attached, can detract enormously from both the character of individual buildings and the locality. Plastic or non-retractable examples look particularly out of place.



*An example of a retractable canvas canopy, used here on a shop in Dulverton for its proper purpose of shading the display from direct sunlight.*



*... and again in Lynmouth, adding an extra dimension to the attractiveness of the shop.*



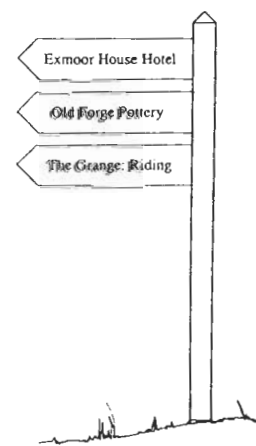
*... but plastic canopies, especially when bolted on purely for advertising purposes are unacceptable and out of place.*

## Advance/Directional Advertisements

Rather than a multitude of individual advance and directional signs cluttering up the street it is more aesthetically pleasing and cost effective for a number of businesses to join forces in producing one composite sign of an appropriate design. More detailed guidance on this subject is available from the NPA.



*Communal private advance direction sign for hotels in Lynton.*



*Suggested fingerpost for private advance direction sign.*



*Straightforward but hardly beautiful!*

# 7 CONVERSION OF TRADITIONAL RURAL BUILDINGS

## 7.1 Introduction

It is inevitable that over the years some buildings will become ill-suited or incapable of being used for the purposes for which they were originally built. In rural areas like Exmoor, with changing agricultural practices, this is particularly true of farm buildings but also applies to other types of structures, such as mills and chapels.

Most traditional buildings do not lend themselves easily to residential conversion as they have very specific forms relating to their original function. Often it is not possible to utilise all the space within a building for a number of reasons: the disposition of the space available might lead to awkward and uneconomic layouts, or the plans would require a great amount of damaging alterations, such as the introduction of new window openings. In these cases it would be preferable to adopt an alternative approach to such conversions.

If a proposal is to be successful and acceptable, it should follow the principles set out below. Although these look more specifically at the conversion of farm buildings to residential or commercial use, non-agricultural buildings are subject to the same broad principles.

## 7.2 Openings

The intrusion of unsuitable new openings into farm buildings is perhaps one of the most obviously damaging effects of unsympathetic conversion. Traditionally, farm buildings, particularly in the West Country did not have many doors or windows and adding to them is one of the easiest ways of diminishing the original character.

Breaking into the roof slopes with dormer windows or roof lights is particularly destructive, introducing a feature which is alien to the traditional farm barn. Small windows inserted into the gable end might be appropriate in rare cases.

Retention of existing openings and, where possible, the actual doors and windows within them will make both aesthetic and economic sense. Where timber has to be replaced, simple forms and regard to the original design, such as the size of lintels and doorframes, will be necessary. Timber will have



*Many agricultural barns possess strong visual forms, as shown in these two examples at Bury (top) and Winsford. The conversion of barns into dwellings may not always be the best way to retain this quality. The insertion of new windows, addition of chimneys, roof lights and all the other requirements for a new house, could unless handled with the utmost skill, most certainly damage any integrity such structures possess.*



been left to weather naturally or more recently have been creosoted and therefore a dark oak staining of new timbers is usually best. Aluminium or UPVC windows will never be sympathetic.

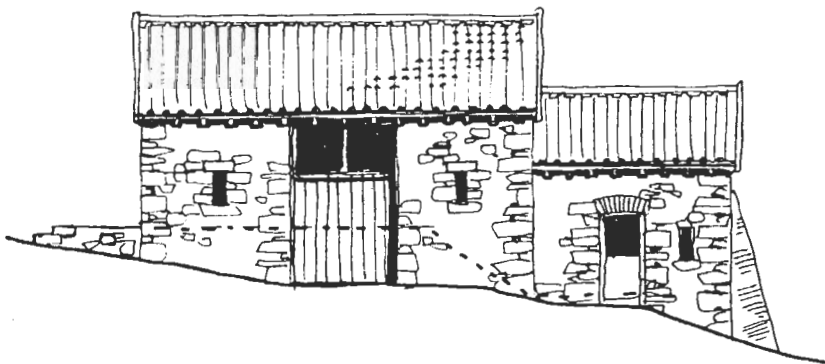




*Don't let this ...*



*... become this. The use of unsympathetic fenestration, with new openings that ignore the pleasant simple shape of the barn, has resulted in this unsightly conversion.*



*If conversion to residential use is agreed, the concept of minimal change will apply, whereby the essential form of the building will be retained and elevational features will largely dictate the internal layout. Here, minimum alteration to the external appearance has required that windows be inserted within existing openings, and, if necessary, internal floor levels adjusted to suit these openings.*

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### 7.3 Original Structure and Features

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The total demolition and rebuilding of the walls of old buildings defeats the purpose of the conservation exercise. For example, the effect of sullied lime-mortar stone walls, or walls of cob, cannot be reproduced by modern stone-faced cement-mortared block walls without affecting the validity of a traditional building.

To preserve both a building's history and its integrity, it is advisable to retain as much of the original structure as possible; existing window openings, if small, should be kept and not enlarged, whilst existing door openings should be retained, even if not required in a conversion scheme.

External features such as hoists, pigeon holes and stone steps can easily be retained. Rainwater goods are not traditional on agricultural buildings but if absolutely necessary metal ones will blend in most successfully.

Similarly the existing plan form and internal features may be important and should be researched and recorded if possible when proposals for conversion works are being drawn up.



*Many shops in Exmoor villages were once cottages, and this window is part and parcel of the cottage vernacular. Its replacement with a more modern alternative would be simply unthinkable!*



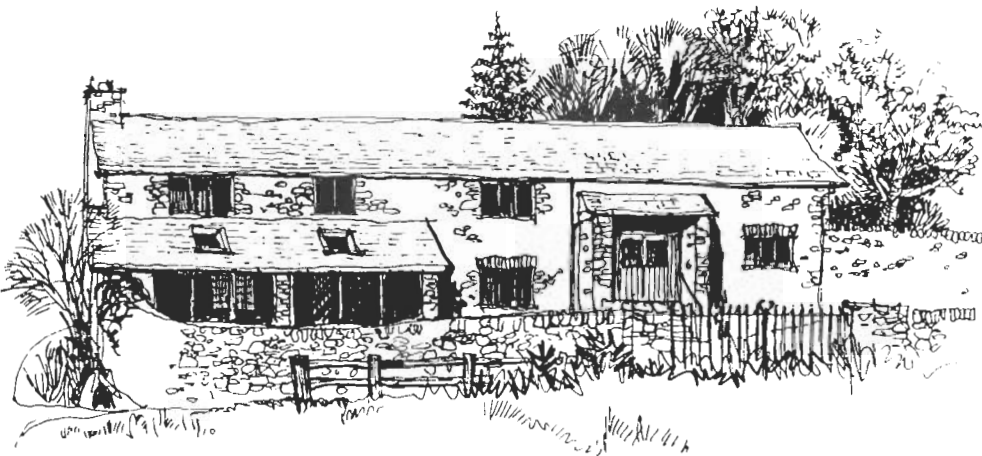
*This barn at Dunster, with its columnar structure through two storeys, is perhaps not typical of barns in the region, but has been sympathetically converted into residential use while retaining the integrity of the entire building.*



*A redundant agricultural barn at Nichols Farm, Brompton Regis, (left), and (right) a visually satisfactory residential conversion.*



*Little Highercombe Farm, Dulverton, before conversion...*



*... and after. Barn conversions such as this need to be done with an eye to the original structure if they are to be judged as successful.*

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## 7.4 Roofs

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Where the conversion works involve the repair of a roof, the NPA would urge owners and their contractors to retain, consistent with good building practice, any interesting irregularities in both alignment and materials that the passage of the years has added. All too often these subtle distortions of shape, that are part of the charm of old buildings, are removed in reconstruction work and replaced by new, straight edged materials.

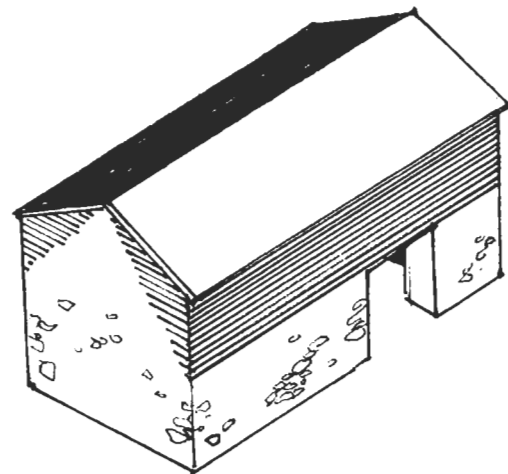
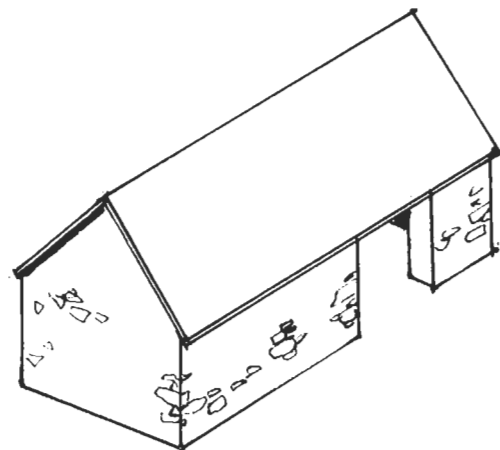
Dormer windows, for example, usually only occur in houses. Their introduction into otherwise plain and simple roof forms of other types of buildings being considered for conversion, such as barns, storage buildings and warehouses, mills and chapels, would not be recommended. Similarly, the provision of sloping rooflights would not be supported, although exceptions may be made in special circumstances, where it can be shown that there is no other acceptable way to light an internal space and the location is on a rear and unobtrusive elevation.

Raising the roof height is considered to be an extension of the building and may therefore be inappropriate. If possible, the original roofing materials should be used where repairs and additions are being proposed; there are often sources where matching tiles or slates can generally be obtained and certainly the use of modern substitutes

would not be recommended.

Chimney stacks are so identified with domestic dwellings that their addition to previously agricultural buildings is frequently inappropriate. Metal flues, painted matt black, do not present the same problems and are relatively unobtrusive.

Similarly, satellite dishes, which need to be positioned for maximum reception and not with regard to any elevational appearance of the property, would not be favoured, and television aerials should be placed inside a roof space, where possible.



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## 7.5 Inside the building

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Wholesale sub-division of the often spectacular open interiors of barns in particular can destroy or hide much of the architectural interest. Using galleries, and allowing part of the ground floor to extend into double height, thereby leaving some significant part open to the roof, is one way of overcoming this. Where internal features of interest have survived, such as stall divisions or grain bins, thought should be given to their preservation and integration in the overall scheme. Disused machinery such as threshers, mill wheels and cider presses could also be retained and preserved, rather than discarded.

*... raising the roof height is considered to be an extension of the building and may therefore be inappropriate.*

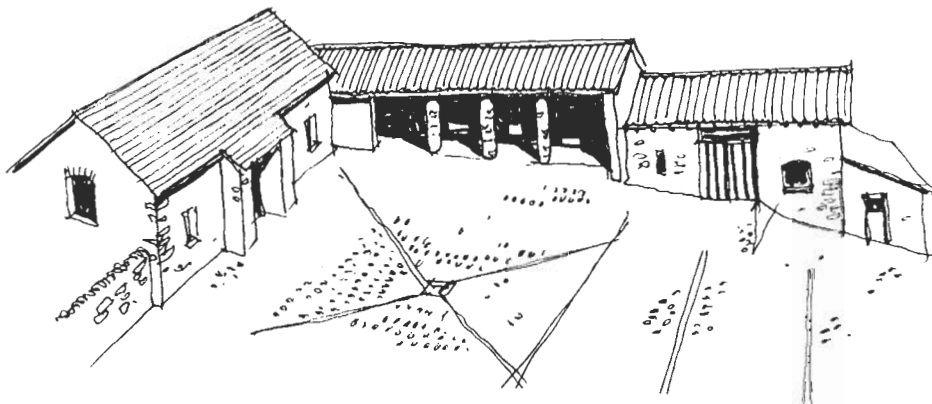
## 7.6 Context and Surroundings

However sensitive the details of the conversion, the effect will be spoiled if a clutter of unsuitable constructions is allowed around it. The division of yards and paddocks by walls or fences, the construction of garages and greenhouses and the siting of hard-standings must all be minimised if a detrimental suburban effect is to be avoided. Garages in particular should, if possible, be accommodated in existing buildings rather than be new structures in a farmyard setting.

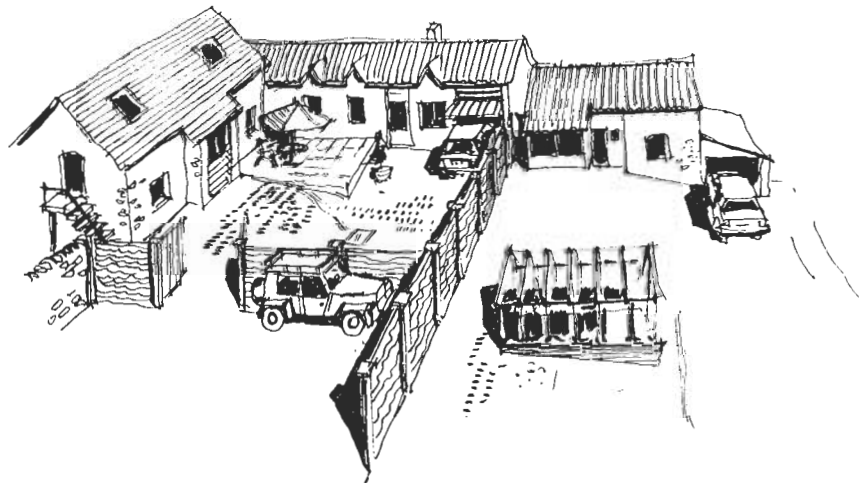
Consideration may be given to the repair of other traditional buildings in the farmstead group, alongside the conversion itself, to enable comprehensive preservation and a more attractive form of development.



*Originally a chapel, this building has suffered at the hands of over-enthusiastic restorers. The windows and rooflight, and more particularly the UPVC doors, are totally unsuitable and probably replaced fine timber versions that should, if possible, have been repaired and retained.*



*A typical farm courtyard, as it might appear before disposal and conversion ...*



*... and afterwards. The sub-division of the open yard, the location of garages and greenhouses and the provision of chimneys, dormers and rooflights has resulted in the total loss of any rural character.*

# 8 REPAIR OF OLD BUILDINGS

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## 8.1 Introduction

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It is beyond the scope of this guide to deal in any detail with repairs to old and historic buildings because of their infinite variety. The majority of buildings of special architectural or historic interest are already listed, and work to alter or extend these will need separate listed building consent. There are a number of historic buildings on Exmoor, including large houses, cottages, farmhouses, chapels and mills, and it is the responsibility of their owners to ensure that these structures are well maintained.

Problems can arise, however, when the cost of repairs becomes beyond the financial resources of an owner, or the property itself has become vacant. Advice on grants for repairs is available from the National Park Authority.

All buildings decay and the rate of this depends on the materials used and the location of the building in terms of exposure to the weather. Buildings with complicated roof outlines and valley gutters, for instance, can experience problems. Decay will be accelerated through lack of routine maintenance, lack of paint on external timber or attention to leaking roofs and gutters. The main purpose of repair is to hold back the natural process of decay without damaging the character of the building.



*Sketch of the Old Bakery at Winsford as it would have appeared during the last century, before later alterations.*



*Winsford.*



*Stoates Farm, Allerford.*



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## 8.2 Historical Context

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It is necessary to have a clear understanding of the historical context within which a building was constructed before carrying out repair work. This is particularly important for complex repair work to Grade I or II\* listed buildings, or where the works affect any special architectural or historic feature.

Although straightforward maintenance work and repairs, replacing like with like, do not require specific consent, those who are contemplating other works to a listed building are strongly advised to engage the services of a professional architect or surveyor with experience of building restoration.

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## 8.3 Avoiding Unnecessary Replacement Work

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Works of repair must be kept to the minimum required to stabilise and conserve the building. The aim must be to achieve a sound structural condition to ensure long-term survival.

Any repair work must respect the original fabric and design, together with any important later additions or alterations.

Unnecessary replacement of historic material will harm the appearance of the building and will affect its authenticity. A comparison could be made with the repair of an antique piece of furniture. It is inconceivable, for example, that the leg of a valuable Georgian table would be entirely replaced because it had suffered some woodworm attack.



*(Right) Re-thatching after fire, Royal Oak, Winsford.*

*(Left) Etched glass door panel, Lion Hotel, Dulverton. Even familiar and scarcely noticed details such as this add considerably to the character of a building's interior, and should be retained.*

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## 8.4 Proven Techniques

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Repair techniques must be compatible with existing materials and methods of construction. Generally, traditional or well proven methods should be adopted. However, sometimes structural failure has resulted from inherent defects in the original design or specification of materials rather than from neglect, such as a poor choice of stone. In such cases imaginative methods of repair may be appropriate.

Repairs should be carried out with no attempt to disguise or artificially age the work. For example the distressing of beams to give them an 'olde worlde' appearance should be avoided. The repairs should not be unnecessarily obtrusive, but it is acceptable to be able to differentiate between the new work and the old.

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## 8.5 Removal of Later Alterations and Additions

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In the course of its life, an historic building will usually have been altered and extended several times to satisfy the needs and aspirations of successive new owners. These alterations are often an intrinsic part of the history of the building - this includes work carried out in the 20th century which can be architecturally significant and an example of fine craftsmanship. If this is the case, careful consideration should be given to their retention.



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## 8.6 Maintenance

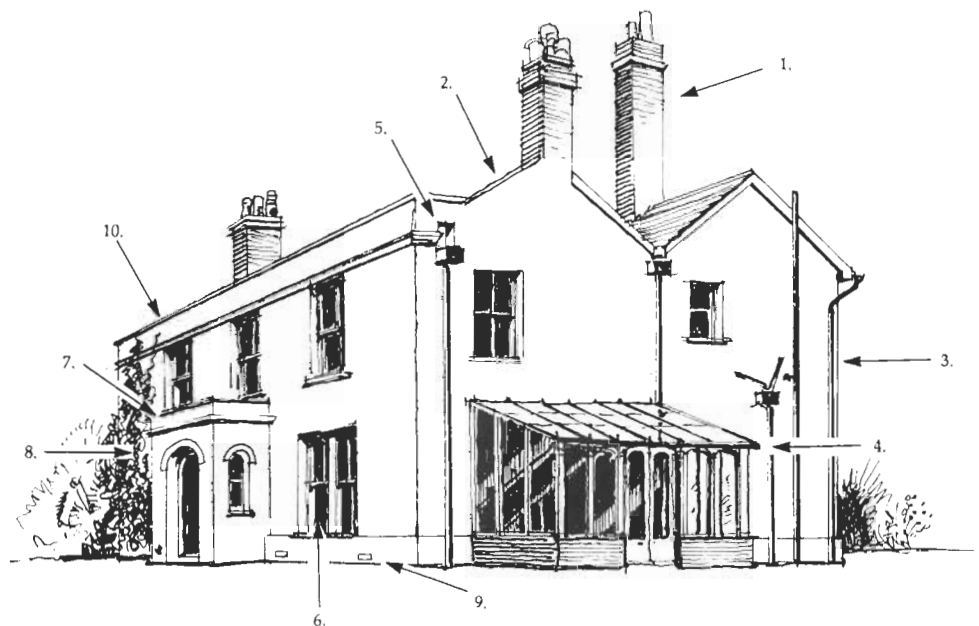
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The most effective way of prolonging the life of any building is to carry out regular maintenance. This will reduce the likelihood of expensive repairs in future years. Such work is part of the day-to-day responsibility of all owners and occupiers of buildings - a stitch in time saves nine! There is no point in treating the symptoms of decay without first tackling their fundamental causes as this will only lead to later expensive repair work. For example, decay is often caused by water penetration from leaking gutters and downpipes. Therefore the whole water disposal system must receive attention at the same time as repairs to walls or joinery are carried out.

Similarly, painting over damp marks or wet and rotting woodwork will only briefly hide the problem: what is needed is a cure for the cause of dampness and, in the case of timber, its replacement before repainting.

Some types of structural failure, such as cracks in masonry, may require longer term observation by a structural engineer to determine the fundamental causes.

Where repairs to stucco and rendered walls are necessary, ensure appropriate materials are used, such as lime mortar, and lime wash.



1. Tall chimneys may be vulnerable to collapse during high winds, particularly if the mortar in the brickwork is eroded. They should be stayed, or, in exceptional circumstances, reduced in height. For a listed building this needs consent.

2. Where the building comprises double roofs, valley gutters need to be checked and cleared regularly. Also check hopper-heads are clear of debris and water runs freely.

3. Rain water gutters and rain water down pipes should be regularly checked. Iron pipes can crack, and this could lead to damp walls if not attended to.

4. Cracked or missing glazing must be replaced.

5. Parapet gutters are particularly vulnerable to roof debris collecting in them and should be regularly inspected and cleaned.

6. Vertical sliding sashes get much wear and tear over the years and may need to be replaced by new identical timber windows.

7. Flat roofs to porches, etc, need regular maintenance to ensure lead or slates are in good condition and water runs away freely.

8. Avoid dense planting close to house walls that reduces the opportunities for the walls to dry out. Certain climbing plants should be avoided, as they may disturb mortar joints and fascias.

9. Keep air bricks free from being obscured by flower beds and planting. As most historic buildings have no damp proof course, keep the lower walls free at all times.

10. Roofs need regular attention; any cracked or missing tiles should be replaced at once.

# 9 LANDSCAPE WORKS

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## 9.1 Introduction

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The treatment of a building's surroundings, whether man-made or natural, is as important as the building itself, and rather than being seen as an afterthought such details should strongly influence the design of new development.

Boundaries were often local natural stone walls or stone faced banks with hedges on top. These boundary features would have been on the road edge or between properties. Field boundaries, usually of beech, dating from the 18th and 19th centuries are an important feature of Exmoor, although other hedge species are to be seen.



*Trees providing added protection in the more hilly areas*



*... field boundaries in the 19th century were usually beech hedgebanks.*

## 9.2 Simple rules

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Spaces between buildings should be positively designed and not be the left over awkward corners after development has finished. Consider how spaces have traditionally worked in the area and make use of these tested patterns which give places their character. It is difficult to reinstate old features such as mature trees, hedgebanks, old walls and traditional paving patterns. They have an irreplaceable value and should, whenever possible, be incorporated into the scheme.

In the past, gardens were traditionally enclosed (from animals) and it makes sense to retain this idea

and not to use suburban style treatments with rolling expanses of grass and ill-chosen trees, inappropriate to Exmoor's landscape. Traditionally-built walls or hedgebanks could be used partially to screen the new development and to create private, secluded gardens. Try using orchards or woodland to form an interface between new development and the surrounding open countryside.

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## 9.3 Planting

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The best season to plant bare rooted trees, hedging and shrubs is between October and March, the earlier in the planting season the better. For all new planting, ensure a good water supply, mulch \* or use herbicides to prevent weed growth, and protect against stock and rabbits where necessary. The importance of irrigation and weed control, particularly in the early stages of a plant's life, cannot be over-emphasised. Too many plants are lost in landscape schemes through a lack of maintenance.

If possible, plant new trees and shelter belts before the development commences. This will give maturity to the site on completion of the development.

\* note: peat should not be used as a mulch or soil improver because of the damage caused to peat bogs in its excavation. There are many good alternatives such as bark mulch, spent mushroom compost, farmyard manure and leaf litter.



*Old Priory, Dunster.*

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## 9.4 Vegetation

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### Trees

Retain existing trees whenever possible. When planting, use indigenous species, naturally found on Exmoor, unless the local character dictates otherwise. Whips or transplants will generally be far more successful than standards although



*Beech hedge.*

sometimes the planting of semi-mature trees alongside smaller stock will help to give an instant effect.

### Shrubs

They are useful as a fairly quick, dense, low maintenance screen. The imaginative use of native species is generally much more appropriate than common urban species.

### Hedges

It is best to use what is growing locally. Beech is typical of much, but not all, of Exmoor.

### Short Grass

This is rather over-used and requires constant maintenance. A good alternative might be to use natural grass and wildflower mixes. It makes sense to avoid awkward mowing areas within the design and to incorporate a mowing strip.



*Shrub planting softens the hard lines of the brick walls around this parking area. Together with the new tree planting, this will, in time, become a successful piece of urban landscaping.*



*Timberscombe: houses set amongst lush vegetation.*

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## 9.5 Hard Materials

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### Paving

At only less than 1.8m away from eye level, the 'floodscape' of town and village pavements needs to be given the greatest consideration. Unfortunately, it is all too often ignored and tarmac or gravel used in an unsensitive way. Here is a missed opportunity to improve the quality of the immediate surroundings.

Setts and slab paving, when used in locations where there is likely to be a pedestrian and vehicle conflict, help to define an area where vehicle drivers must take care and drive slowly.

It is possible to design for function as much as for

decoration. (The use of slate strips or stone paving within pebbles to enable easy walking is an attractive suggestion). The use of local materials, traditionally laid, is always advisable and where possible paving should be used to link the new building to its surroundings.

### Tracks and Courtyards

Local gravel or stabilised earth may be most appropriate for farm tracks and courtyards. Modern materials such as tarmac or *in situ* concrete can be enhanced by top dressing or finishing with a local aggregate. As a broad guide, the finished colour and feature should match that of the underlying soil or rock.

Kerbs, pavements, lighting and street furniture are generally inappropriate in the countryside and may have an instant urbanising effect on a new development. Advice on such details can be obtained from the local Highway Authority or the NPA.

### Surface Water Run-off

When rain falls on hard materials such as roofs and paving, the water usually runs away rapidly into drainage channels. If the water table is not replenished, levels drop and existing vegetation can suffer. Therefore, where possible, surface water should be run into areas of vegetation.



*Cobbles and setts, both make a pleasing floorscape.*

## 9.6 Site works

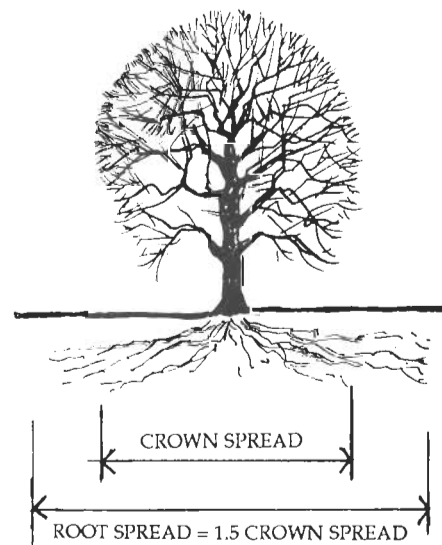
All work should be carried out to the appropriate British Standard.

Vegetation to be retained on site should be protected with fencing, to prevent it being damaged by machinery hitting the trees and shrubs, excavation of the roots and soil compaction. Ensure no waste oil or diesel fuel is spilt on areas to be protected.

Do not light fires beneath or near vegetation and do not store soil, building materials, cabins or rubbish beneath the tree canopy. Ensure that ground and water levels around the trees remain unaltered.

Top soil is best stored on site in mounds not exceeding 2m high for not more than a year and protected by mulch or green manure.

Water courses should be protected at all times and not be used to dispose of waste materials or to clean equipment.



*No works shall be permitted within 1.5 x diameter of the crown spread, in order to ensure no damage is sustained to the root system.*



# 10 DESIGNING FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

## 10.1 Introduction

In order to fulfil its objective of promoting public enjoyment of Exmoor, the NPA urges developers and landowners to ensure that the amenities of the national park can be experienced by everyone, including those with physical disabilities. The NPA will encourage early discussions with developers and landowners in this matter even where it does not already have a statutory duty to do so.



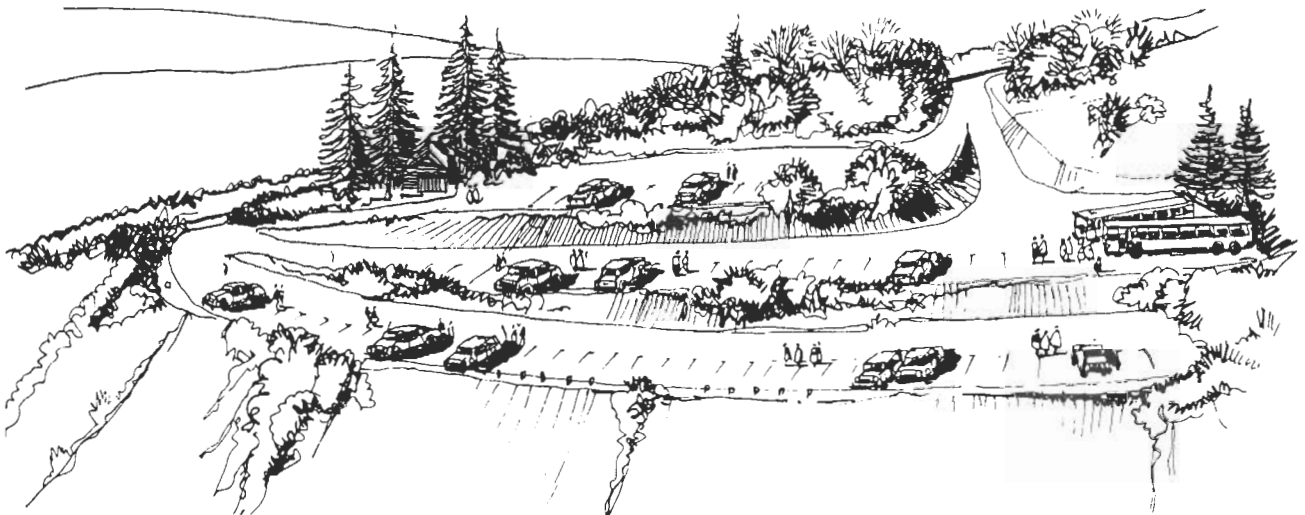
*Car parking areas should make provision for people with disabilities, such as this example at Tarr Steps, where pedestrian access is relatively flat and close to the attraction.*

## 10.2 Car Parking

Many of Exmoor's beauty spots and other attractions are remote from settlements and accessible for many disabled persons only by motor vehicle, be it by car or by coach. Consequently, a slightly higher proportion of parking spaces should be reserved for badge holders than at a comparable attraction in an urban area. In cases where the main car park is located some distance away, or can only be reached via one of Exmoor's steep hills, spaces may have to be provided separately adjacent to the attraction. Such a facility will necessarily require suitable signposting.



*Tarr steps car park showing landscaping.*



*Both layout and landscaping are important when designing large car parks in open country. Here, at the public car park at Tarr Steps, advantage has been taken of the hill slope to provide three distinct levels of parking areas each separated by a bank of planting. This car park is a few hundred yards from Tarr Steps itself, where a smaller car park for those with disabilities has been laid out (see above). The extensive ground cover and planting at this site has been omitted from this sketch in order to show the levels more clearly.*

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## 10.3 Existing Buildings

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Most publicly accessible facilities on Exmoor are based in old buildings. In these cases it may be possible to incorporate a discreet subsidiary entrance or to insert a ramp instead of conventional steps. However, the internal floors of some Exmoor buildings, such as shops, are often at a significantly different level from that of the street. This might render a ramp too steep for wheelchairs and in these cases such provision, regrettably, is best disregarded.

For listed buildings, applicants are advised to contact the NPA in order to discuss the best means of improving access for the disabled while not prejudicing the building's particular character.



*Changes in levels, however slight, can be a hazard to people with disabilities.*



*Pedestrian ramp for people with disabilities.  
National Westminster Bank, Dulverton.*

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## 10.4 New Buildings

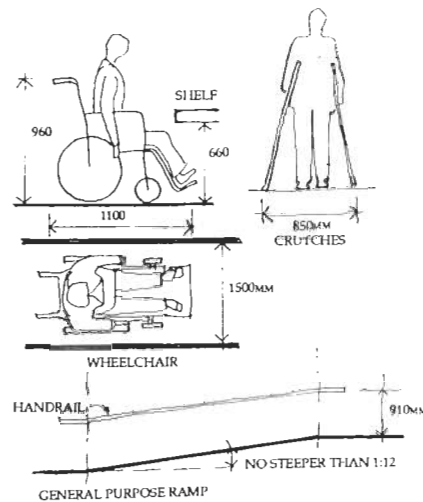
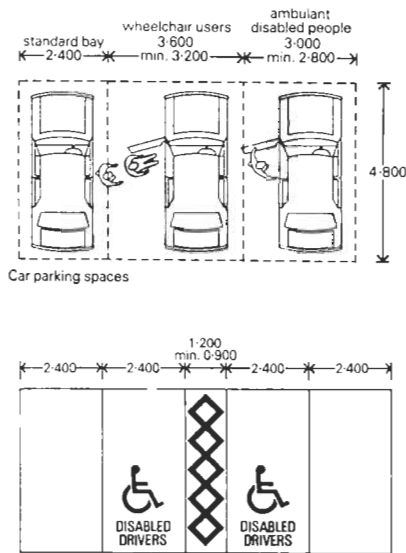
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In new schemes it is easier to incorporate purpose built facilities for the disabled and the NPA has a statutory duty to draw a developer's attention to the needs of the disabled where publicly accessible buildings are proposed. However, even in other cases this will be encouraged. For instance, if Exmoor is to be enjoyed by everyone, including those with disabilities, housing and holiday accommodation of all types will be required. Where



*Cobbles and loose gravel are attractive but for some can be difficult to walk on. This example, within a private garden, shows what can be done to overcome this problem.*

a number of self catering holiday units are proposed it would make economic and design sense to ensure that a proportion of the units are equipped to meet the particular requirements of people with disabilities.



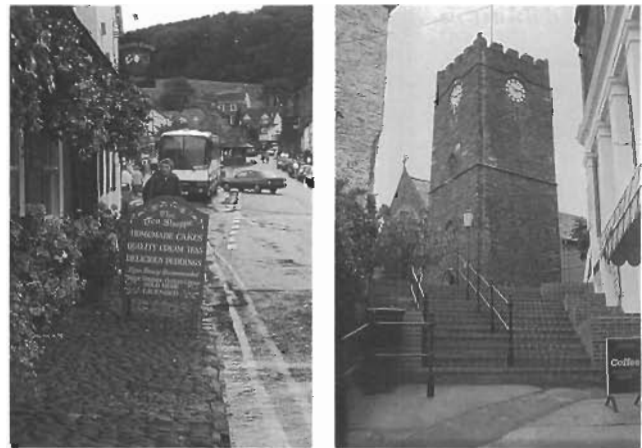
(Above) Some helpful dimensions.  
 (Left) Parking spaces marked for disabled drivers. Where developers are required to provide private parking for housing, sheltered housing and retirement homes, for example, they should set out some for those with disabilities. From "Parking", Somerset County Council's guidance to developers on vehicle parking.

## 10.5 Streetscape

Many of Exmoor's shopping streets and pavements are narrow. There should be a minimum of street furniture and general clutter, such as pavement advertising boards, items projecting from buildings below head height, postcard and other display stands and small bollards. This will avoid creating hazards for people with disabilities, especially the blind or partially sighted.

Steps should not be introduced unnecessarily into pedestrian routes or areas. Any flights of steps should have handrails. Where changes in ground levels are unavoidable ramps wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair should be provided.

Ground surface treatment requires special attention as well. Cobbles and loose gravel, for example, are attractive and traditional but difficult for people with some disabilities to walk on. A narrow strip of more suitable paving material should be laid along busier pedestrian routes. Benches and seats, placed at convenient intervals, are also helpful.



(Left) A-boards can sometimes be a hazard to the partially sighted on forecourts and pavements.  
 (Right) Handrails at Lynton.

# 11 ENERGY CONSERVATION

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## 11.1 Introduction

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By designing buildings that minimise energy consumption, or making efforts to decrease wastage in old buildings, one can assist in reducing environmental pollution, saving natural resources and perhaps, most important to the occupier, reducing fuel bills.

## 11.2 Existing Buildings

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Previous generations on Exmoor appreciated that a south facing aspect, with principal rooms to the front of the house, takes advantage of solar gain to increase levels of both natural heat and light. The principle is no different today. Geographically Exmoor has a preponderance of steep sided valleys which often means that north facing slopes receive little or no sun during the winter months.

Although the houses and cottages built on Exmoor during the past centuries may look splendidly energy efficient, with their thick, solid walls, small windows and protective roofs of thick slate or thatch, in many ways the reverse is true.

The thick stone walls could become damp and had low insulation value and a rapid heat loss. The

small windows were widely spaced, and whilst few would have been positioned on the north facing side of the building their construction allowed them to be draughty and to lose heat through the single glazing. Some natural ventilation is of course necessary to allow a house to 'breathe' and to some extent reduce the effects of damp, rot and the effects radon gas.

The steep pitched roofs provided good protection against driving wind and rain but, again, provided a low insulation value. The external doors were simply built with plain vertical boarding. They were prone to warping slightly, which allowed draughty conditions to develop. Porches shielded the main doors from the wind, rain and snow.



*'... and solid walls, small windows and protective roofs of thick slate or thatch ...'*

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## 11.3 Refurbishment and Alterations

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There are various ways in which energy conservation measures can be achieved. During the refurbishment of existing buildings the following improvements may be considered but should always be balanced against the effects on the character of the building. Specialist conservation advice should always be sought.

If walls are solid cavity insulation is obviously not an option. Insulation may be increased by the provision of an insulation layer on the inner face of external walls which is then covered with a dry lining. Rigid insulation boards can be installed to the existing structure, although this approach can entirely alter the internal character of an old building where a perfectly smooth finish would be out of place.

It is important to note that in the case of cob and random stone walls internal and external finishes must be carefully selected. Such structures deteriorate rapidly if sealed with impermeable finishes which prevent evaporation and the drying out of rising moisture. Advice on this should always be sought from specialists.

When replacing windows obviously consideration of double glazing is worthwhile. The use of materials such as metal or plastic is discouraged as they are really not compatible with traditional buildings. Timber window units with individual double glazed lights, craftsman-made to match the original window, can reduce draughts and minimise heat loss. Replacement windows should be recessed into the window openings and with good maintenance will be very durable.

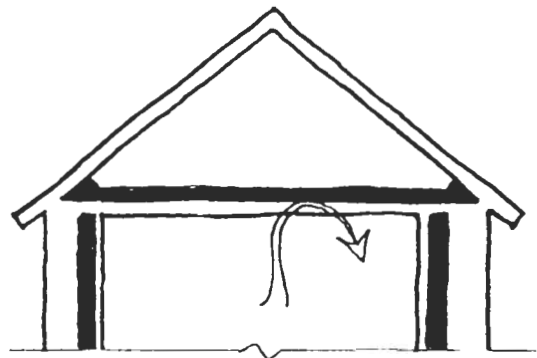
Discreet secondary glazing and adequate seals are also of value and may not detract from the intrinsic character of an old building. Draught lobbies to external doors are also helpful in reducing heat loss.

The greatest heat loss from a building is via the roof structure. This can amount to some 70% of the overall loss and a significant saving can be effected by installing loft insulation.

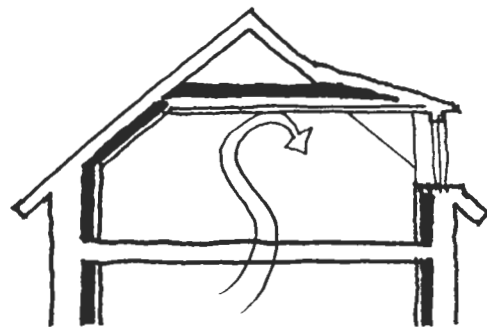
If the roof structure is to remain as existing, then a quilted layer of insulation may be laid on the floor of the loft. This will result in a 'cold' roof space and all pipe works and water tanks will require lagging.

If the roof space is to be used for accommodation

insulation may be installed against the underside of the roof structure, close to the felt/tiles. This will produce a 'warm' roof space which may then be developed without disturbance to insulation. This latter treatment can detract from the internal character of a traditional roof and should not be considered where fine detailing exists.



*In refurbishment and alteration work to the older houses, if there is no living accommodation in the roof space, then a minimum 100mm insulation should be placed above the ceiling joists.*



*If however, the roof space is to be used, then 100mm roof insulation should be taken to the underside of the roof rafters. Apply 100mm insulation and dry-lining to the inside of solid internal walls.*

*Alternatively, if there is enough room, an inner masonry skin, formed of 100mm insulation blocks, with 100mm insulation in the cavity, will help to offset heat loss through solid walls.*

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## 11.4 New Buildings

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### Extensions

The details of new doors and windows will be dictated by visual as well as energy conservation needs.

Other measures, such as wall insulation, will be easily incorporated and will ensure that the construction complies with the latest Building Regulations. Loft insulation will be required as the Building Regulations specify standards of construction which ensure the energy efficiency of buildings.

### New Buildings

As with extensions, the standard of construction is dictated by the latest Building Regulations and compliance will ensure an energy efficient building and a good standard of comfort.

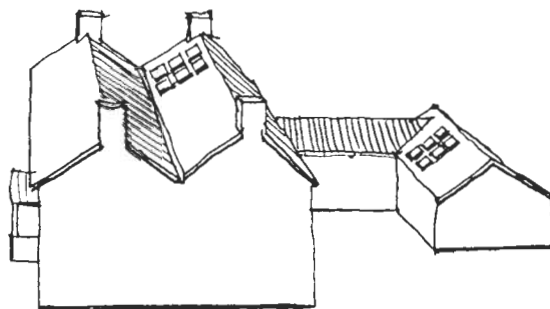
External elements such as windows and doors will be governed by planning controls and consents. However there is scope for the reduction of energy consumption, for example by the insertion of double glazing and the provision of draught lobbies in new designs, thereby increasing comfort and saving on heating bills.

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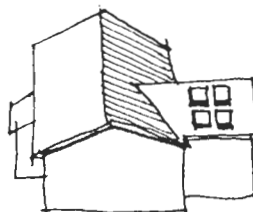
## 11.5 Solar Panels

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There has been a trend in recent years to promote the use of solar panels. Of necessity, they must face a southerly direction which can detract from the character and appearance of both new dwellings and traditional cottages if they are mounted on the roadside elevation of the roof. If possible they should be relocated to the rear of the building and either placed on outbuildings or other structures within the garden where they will be less prominent.



*For instance, if the house is double-roofed, it might be possible to locate solar panels on the inner slope, or, alternatively, on a conveniently positioned outhouse.*



*For the smaller house or bungalow, a side roof slope, away from the house front might provide the answer.*

*Seek advice from the National Park planning officers before you install solar panels as they might be able to suggest alternative proposals to lessen their visual impact.*