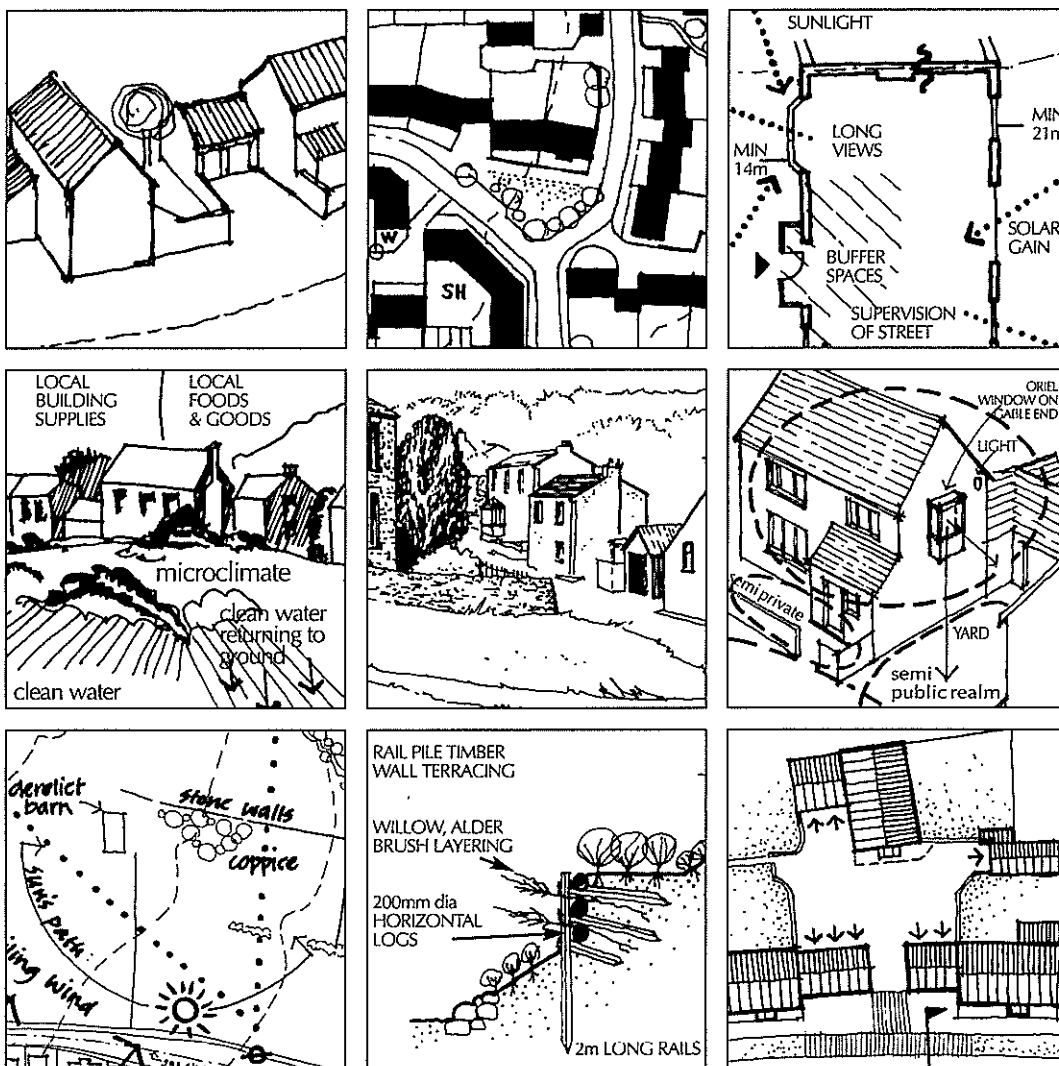


Forest of Dean RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDE



University of the West of England
for
Forest of Dean District Council

Forest of Dean

RESIDENTIAL
DESIGN GUIDE

University of the West of England
for
Forest of Dean District Council

This document was produced by staff in the Faculty of the Built Environment at the University of the West of England for the Forest of Dean District Council in close collaboration with their members and officers and other key agencies.

University of the West of England

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Useful References
Building Materials found
in the Forest of Dean

A checklist of key principles
to be addressed is set out on pages 6 and 7



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This guidance has been produced to assist those seeking planning permission for residential development within the District. The need for additional guidance has become apparent with recent unsuitable development proposals. The Authority is keen to avoid the sort of schemes that (a) might be built “anywhere” and (b) ignore generally accepted environmental concerns. Hence two fundamental issues underpin this guidance:-

- The design of individual dwellings and the grouping of buildings should reflect the local characteristics which give each part of the District a sense of place and identity.
- Applications should demonstrate how environmental concerns and the issue of sustainability have been incorporated into the design.

The purpose of the guide is to make developers more aware of the policies and approach adopted by the Authority and hence encourage a speedier and more efficient design and planning process.

This document has been adopted by the Forest of Dean District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Local Plan.

The information contained in the guide is applicable throughout the District. However those familiar with the Forest of Dean will be aware that the character varies considerably from one part of the District to another. This implies that a design which is acceptable in one area of the Forest may be inappropriate in another part of the District. The guide provides assistance by examining the local distinctiveness of

- different locations within the District
- various forms and sizes of settlement
- the position of a proposal within a settlement.

Advice is restricted to predominantly residential development, although some mixed uses are encouraged in larger schemes. This guidance is intended for groups of dwellings and has not been produced for the design, extension and alteration of single buildings although the principles established will be relevant for individual buildings.

Central Government has declared its views on design with the Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 (1997). This identifies three themes which underpin the Governments’ approach to the planning system

- sustainable development
- mixed use
- quality of design

“Local Planning Authorities should not attempt to impose a particular architectural taste or style arbitrarily. It is, however, proper to seek to promote and reinforce local distinctiveness particularly where this is supported by clear plan policies or supplementary design guidance.”

paragraph 18, PPG1, 1997.

“Those aspects of our past which have been identified as being of historic importance are to be valued and protected for their own sake, as a central part of our cultural heritage. Their presence adds to the quality of our lives, by enhancing the familiar and cherished scene and sustaining the sense of local distinctiveness which is so important an aspect of the character and appearance of our towns, villages and countryside.”

paragraph 32, PPG1, 1997.

“Sustainable Development seeks to deliver the objective of achieving, now and in the future, economic development to secure higher living standards while protecting and enhancing the environment.”

World Commission on Environment and Development, 1997.

Sustainable Development according to HMG

“The Government therefore supports the principle of sustainable development. This means living on the earth’s income rather than eroding its capital. It means keeping the consumption of renewable natural resources within the limits of their replenishment. It means handing down to successive generations not only man-made wealth (such as buildings, roads and railways) but also natural wealth, such as clean and adequate water supplies, good arable land, a wealth of wild life and ample forests.”

Cm 2426 (1994)

Central Government is also promoting Local Agenda 21 which seeks to improve local and global environmental conditions. There has also been an initiative on Quality in Town and Country (1996) which calls on local authorities to produce more locally distinctive design solutions. These policies are reflected at the strategic level in the Gloucestershire County Structure Plan and more specifically in the Forest of Dean Local Plan. The intention of this guide is to demonstrate how these policies can be incorporated in the design of new residential development.

In line with recent legislation (The Crime and Disorder Bill), Forest of Dean District Council is committed to creating a strategy to reduce crime and disorder. In recognising the effect the built environment can have on crime and the fear of crime, the Council seeks to influence the design of all development with the express intention of reducing the opportunity for crime and anti social behaviour.

This document offers general principles for new development, it is not intended to be so rigid as to produce repetitive and unimaginative layouts irrespective of the requirements and character of each site and its locality. It is intended that the use of this document will be sufficiently flexible to preserve and enhance the existing character of conservation areas, areas of architectural or historic interest, rural areas generally, and urban areas where the existing character needs to be respected.

Whilst this document can be used as a ‘stand alone guide’, it is nevertheless recommended that applicants should discuss proposals with officers at the earliest opportunity. Regular contact will enable specialist advice regarding Planning, Building Control and Highways to be fed into the design process at the appropriate stage.

Above all this guidance should be seen as indicating opportunities and providing helpful advice for the designer. There is no intention to use this guide to restrict creative solutions which achieve the broad aims of this document.

Preparation of this guide follows extensive consultation with a wide range of individuals and agencies from architects and builders to conservation groups and civic societies, all of whom are concerned with maintaining and enhancing the quality of life in the Forest of Dean.

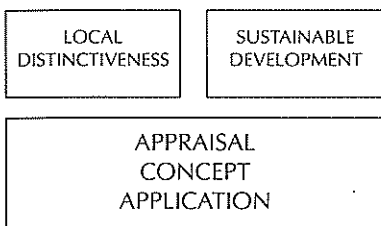
Approach

This guide has been assembled in a form that follows the design process and forms a basis for discussion with the Council’s officers. For simplification the process can be considered as three stages:

- an appraisal of the issues
- a design concept
- the formal application.

At each stage of the design process you are advised to test your thinking against the twin criteria for new residential development in the Forest of Dean:

- that the proposal reflects local distinctiveness
- that development is environmentally sustainable



The design approach will probably involve a series of steps which will result in key issues being revisited several times. In order to keep this document simple the contents have been structured in a linear form. When using the Guide the reader can move between sections in any order. Each of the four key sections of the guide integrates the twin concepts of local distinctiveness and sustainable development. They are:

- Appraisal of Character
- Identification of Key Design Principles
- Comparison of different forms of layout
- Design of individual buildings.

Character

Applicants should be aware that there are several sub areas within the District. Each has its own distinctive characteristics (see Section 2 for details). Six sub areas have been identified:

- Forest Core
- Commons
- Wye Valley
- Severn Vale
- Northern Farmland
- May Hill.

There is also a variety of settlement types with their own development layout characteristics. Four common forms of settlement are:

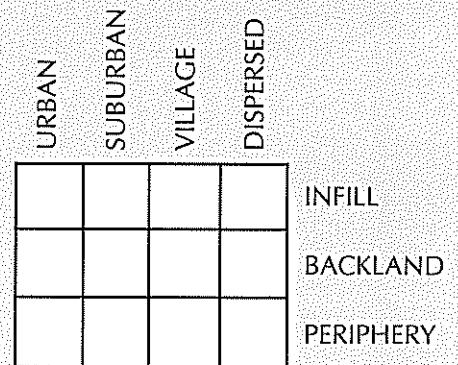
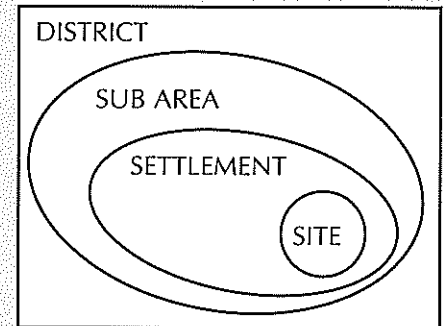
- Urban
- Suburban
- Village
- Dispersed.

The form of development may vary according to its position in each settlement (see diagram opposite).

Design Principles

Designs should be based on a set of principles that uses resources in a sustainable way whilst making an attractive and locally distinctive contribution to the building stock of the Forest area. The following principles are addressed fully in Section 3:

- Design Strategy
- Local Need
- Housing Balance
- Mixed Use
- Work
- Movement & Security
- Energy
- Water
- Open Space & Wildlife
- Aesthetic Quality.

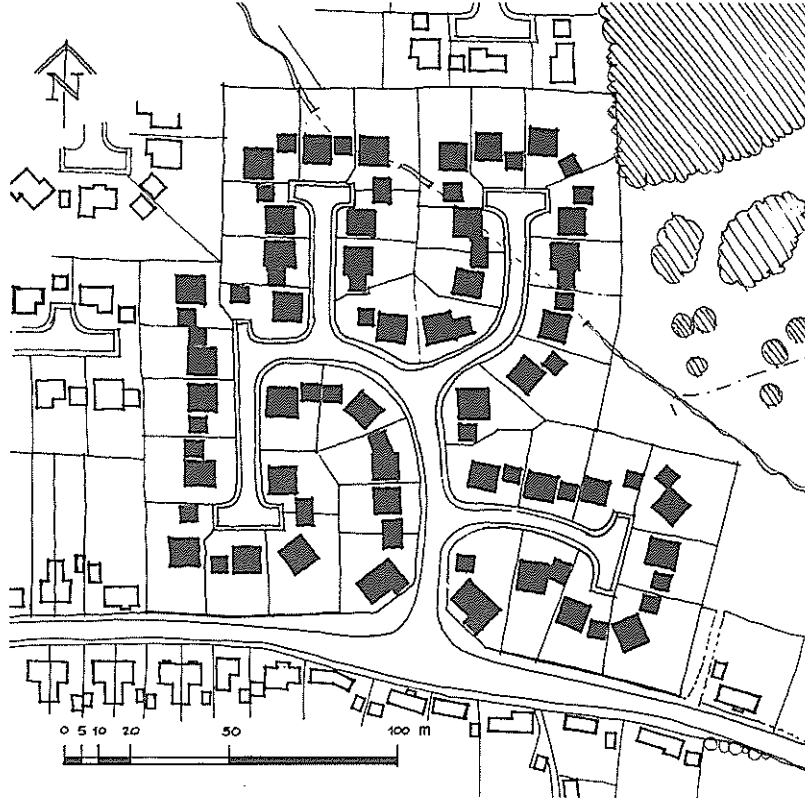


Site Layout

Care should be taken to avoid the 'anywhere' solution. Applicants should pay strong attention to the setting and characteristics of the site. Full guidance on site layout is provided in Section 4. Illustrations of unacceptable and acceptable layouts are shown below.

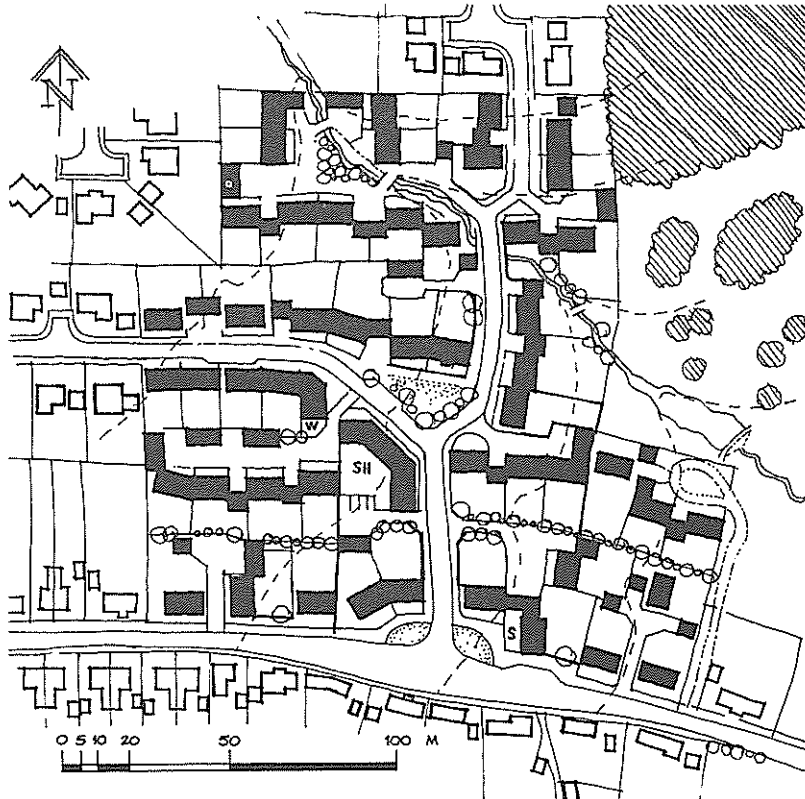
Unacceptable Approach

- suburban character
 - monotonous appearance
 - dominated by roads
 - inappropriate house types
 - inward looking
 - ignores natural features
 - poor orientation
- 42 dwellings



Acceptable Approach

- creates series of spaces
 - appropriate house types
 - traffic calmed
 - routes to local facilities
 - good orientation
 - incorporates mixed uses
 - enhances existing features
 - creates wildlife habitats
 - improved security
- 49 dwellings



Building Design

The architectural forms of traditional houses in the District are essentially simple, but arranged and extended with an appealing complexity.

The scene from the Forest Core below illustrates the informal grouping of buildings, including:

- Consistent use of the long, shallow plan house (both side and end on to the street)
- A variety of terraced forms (buildings are often linked)
- Continuity of boundary structures
- Mixed uses
- A varied and harmonious roofscape.

House design, learning from precedent and providing for the future, should be characterised by:

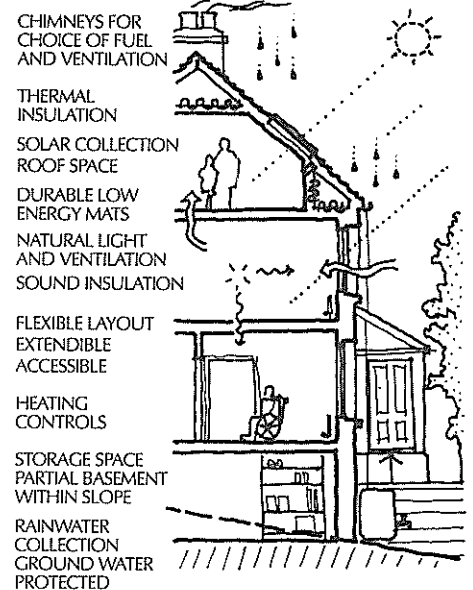
Adaptability: for example

- making full use of any slope
- permitting utilisation of roofspace
- allowing for future extension
- providing flexibility in choice of energy systems (short & long term)
- suiting the needs of young, disabled and elderly people, as well as families.

Resource Conservation: for example

- water conservation & collection
- excellent thermal insulation
- heating controls, solar collection
- durable, easily repaired materials
- materials of low embodied energy
- natural lighting and ventilation.

Guidance on building design is provided in section 5



Summary Checklist

The guide has been structured in section 3, 4 and 5 to identify key concerns. These are set out as a checklist below

Section 3 Design Principles

full information on page

Q1 Integrated design strategy 26

Is the general character, density and arrangement of development on the site designed to reflect and enhance the distinctive character of the locality and achieve more sustainable development?
town centre / in-town / suburban / high street / compact village / sporadic development.

Q2 Local need 28

Does the development provide satisfactorily for housing needs in the locality?
who is it for? / are occupants needs satisfied?

Q3 Housing balance 28

Does the development complement the existing pattern of housing in the area to achieve diversity of provision and variety of design?
less than 5 units / 6-25 units / over25 units.

Q4 Mixed use 29

What, if any, non-housing uses are provided for on site and how do these complement facilities in the locality?

Q5 Work 30

To what extent does the development encourage locally-based work and home-working?
6-25 units / over 25 units or 1 hectare.

Q6 Movement and Security 30

Does the pattern of movement into and across the site, and to local facilities, provide a convenient, safe and attractive pedestrian and cycling environment?

Q7 Energy strategy 31

Is the development designed with energy conservation as a key objective
over 6 units-NHER rating required / 20 plus units CHP considered / all to have good solar orientation

Q8 Water 32

Is the development designed to safeguard the availability and quality of water supplies, avoid problems of flooding and where appropriate, create water-related habitats?

Q9 Open space and wildlife 33

Does the development contribute to local open space provision and enhance wildlife potential?

Q10 Aesthetic quality 34

Will the development enhance the local scene through its innate quality, sympathy for its surroundings and appropriate choice of materials?

Section 4 Site Layout

Q1 Setting 37

Is the setting of the site taken into account in the design of the scheme?
sub-area, settlement type & location, access routes to local facilities.

Q2 Site Characteristics 38

Have the opportunities, constraints and characteristics of the site been taken into account in the design of the scheme?
slope, vegetation, built features, views.

Q3 Concept 39

Have urban design objectives been set?
townscape, edges, hierarchy of form, mixed uses, open space, access.

Q4 Frontages 40

Is the form of the dwelling and the treatment of frontages appropriate to this location?
wide frontage, garage location, continuous or broken frontage.

Q5 Plot shape and size 41

Do individual plots and building footprints relate to the local setting.
size, location.

Q6 Site entrance 42

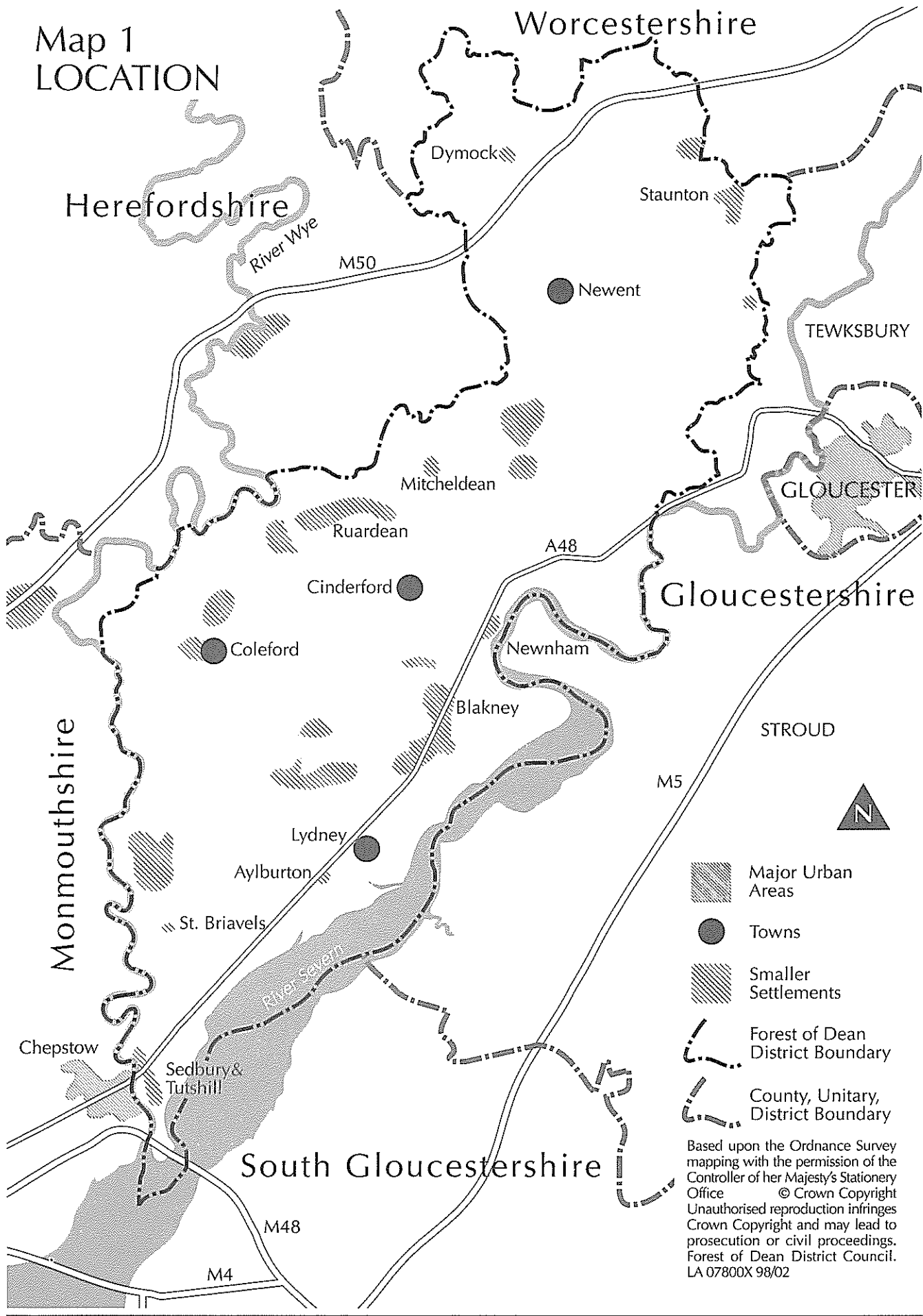
Is the entrance to the site distinctive and in character with the surroundings?






Q7 Vehicular access 43

Can the existing road accommodate frontages with direct vehicular access to groups of houses?

Q8 Traffic speed	44
Are internal access roads designed to reduce the speed of traffic?	
Q9 Focal point	45
Is there a safe place that acts as a focal point to the scheme?	
Q10 Sympathetic Road design	46
Are access roads and junctions designed to be sympathetic to their surroundings?	
Q11 Landscape	47
Does the detailed design of the public areas give priority to the needs of pedestrians and the users of public transport?	
Q12 Drainage	48
Does the proposed drainage design conserve water resources?	
Q13 Boundaries	48
Are ancillary structures and boundaries designed to blend with landscape and / or to maintain the street frontage?	
Section 5 Building Design	
Q1 House types	49
What is the relationship between frontage and plan depth?	
<i>traditional Forest of Dean houses have shallow depth and long frontage.</i>	
Q2 Linking of houses	51
Are houses joined together in various ways?	
<i>repetitive designs are best avoided.</i>	
Q3 Privacy and Security	52
Does the design facilitate views, security and privacy?	
<i>attractive views / demarcate & supervise external spaces / avoid overlooking / effective sound insulation.</i>	
Q4 Sloping ground	53
How does the design make use of sloping ground?	
<i>potential for basements / ease of access for pedestrians & disabled people.</i>	
Q5 Extension	54
Can the main body of the house accommodate adaptation and extension?	
<i>rear or side extensions.</i>	
Q6 Conversion	55
Has the layout the potential to incorporate additional private, communal or non-residential facilities?	
<i>roof space / garage / studio.</i>	
Q7 Roofscape	56
Does the scheme create a varied and interesting roofscape?	
<i>varied ridgeline / roof pitch / eaves level</i>	
Q8 Chimneys	57
Does each unit have a chimney stack?	
Q9 Elevations	58
Does the elevational design reflect the conventions of traditional Forest of Dean houses on the public side(s) of houses?	
<i>front facade / gable walls / order / symmetry / emphasis.</i>	
Q10 Walls	59
Do the walls, in particular the facade, have a massive (ie substantial) quality?	
<i>wall details.</i>	
Q11 Windows	60
How do the windows relate to internal spaces and orientation?	
Q12 Entrances	60
Are entrances designed for ease of access, privacy, shelter and security?	
Q13 Materials and energy	61
Has the embodied energy of the bulk materials used in the construction been minimised?	
Q14 Structural movement	61
Does building design and construction permit slight structural movement?	
Q15 Toxic materials	62
Are the materials used on the building envelope non-toxic and repairable?	
Q16 Colour and texture	62
Are the textures and colours of materials suited to the locality?	

Map 1 LOCATION



-  Major Urban Areas
-  Towns
-  Smaller Settlements
-  Forest of Dean District Boundary
-  County, Unitary, District Boundary

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