Part G:

Agricultural and Rural Buildings

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This part of the Development Requirements SPD provides further detailed guidance on the interpretation of a range of Core Strategy policies, in particular and as appropriate:

- CS.8 Historic Environment
- CS.9 Design and Distinctiveness
- AS.10 Countryside and Villages
- CS.20 Existing Housing Stock and Buildings

It provides information and advice on how applicants can ensure that issues relating to the construction of agricultural buildings, the conversion of traditional agricultural buildings and equestrian activities are achieved in new development. It will be used by Stratford-on-Avon District Council to help reach decisions on whether to approve or refuse planning applications. Making sure that applications comply with the guidance contained within the SPD will make it easier for the Council to grant planning permission. The Council's Planning Policies are set out in the Core Strategy available at www.stratford.gov.uk/corestrategy

Key words or terms which appear throughout the document are included in the Glossary.

G1. Rural Character of Stratford-on-Avon

Stratford-on-Avon District is a predominantly rural District. The rural areas to the north of Stratford-upon-Avon town are covered by the Green Belt, whilst to the south of the District lies the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. All development within our rural areas needs to be sensitively designed to harmonise with the rich rural heritage, so that our countryside is preserved and enhanced for future generations.

Our rural landscape had been shaped over the centuries by farming practices. These changes have occurred slowly over time and have become absorbed into the rural landscape. The attractive appearance of the countryside is affected by modern agriculture and forestry and the perceived need for modern utilitarian and functional buildings. These buildings tend to be of a standardised design and cumulatively the standardised design detracts for the local distinctiveness of the rural area.

This section provides design guidance to assist the construction of high quality agricultural buildings which will balance the need for functional and well- designed buildings that meet modern farming needs, whilst harmonising with the surrounding countryside and its wider landscape and adjacent settlements and enhance local distinctness.

G2. Design considerations

When designing agricultural buildings, careful consideration should be given to its impact on the landscape, and following issues should be addressed:

- Position
- Viewpoints
- Skyline
- Profile
- Colour
- Scale
- Materials
- Grouping
- Historic and Traditional Buildings
- Planting

Position – the position of a new farm building tends to depend on its function and the space available. Consideration should be given to reducing the building's visual prominence, both within the farm complex and landscape; for example by locating the new building behind existing buildings, hedgerows and trees

View points – Due to the scale and materials of modern farm buildings, they may appear as dominant features within the rural landscape. It is important to take account of the impact of the building when seen from important views, both into and out of the site and historic vistas.

Skyline – New buildings can respond to contours and the natural land form by fitting into the folds or valley bottoms and avoiding platforms or exposed ridges and skylines. Applications for locating new buildings in exposed open country sites will have to demonstrate why the siting is specifically required.

Profile – Where possible, buildings should have a low profile. The use of planting around the low buildings helps to integrate them into the landscape. Buildings can be settled into the landscape by using overhanging eaves and large roofs. This creates shadows and gives shape to a building. In circumstances where a tall building is unavoidable, such as a silo, then careful location can provide a humanising and traditional effect, perhaps inferring a settlement.

Colour – Wherever practical, agricultural buildings should be roofed with a dark non-reflective finish, using the landscape as a cue for colour and texture. Generally, where non-traditional materials are being used, the colours should be 'earth' colours, such browns, greys or greens to reflect the local materials, eg. red bricks with a rustic finish. Care should be taken when using green, to ensure that it harmonises with the changing green of the landscape. Darker roofs blend into the landscape more easily than white or reflective materials.

Pale or white buildings should be avoided as they reflect the sunlight and are more conspicuous. If a building has to be light coloured to reduce internal temperatures, then careful siting and planting is essential.

Scale – Careful consideration of the scale of a proposed building should be made to ensure that it does not have an unacceptable intrusive impact on the landscape. The scale of a large single shed/building may be reduced by breaking it down into smaller units and step the profile of the building, if the ground level or unit type allows. Long slab effects should be avoided. The scale of a building will normally have to be justified.

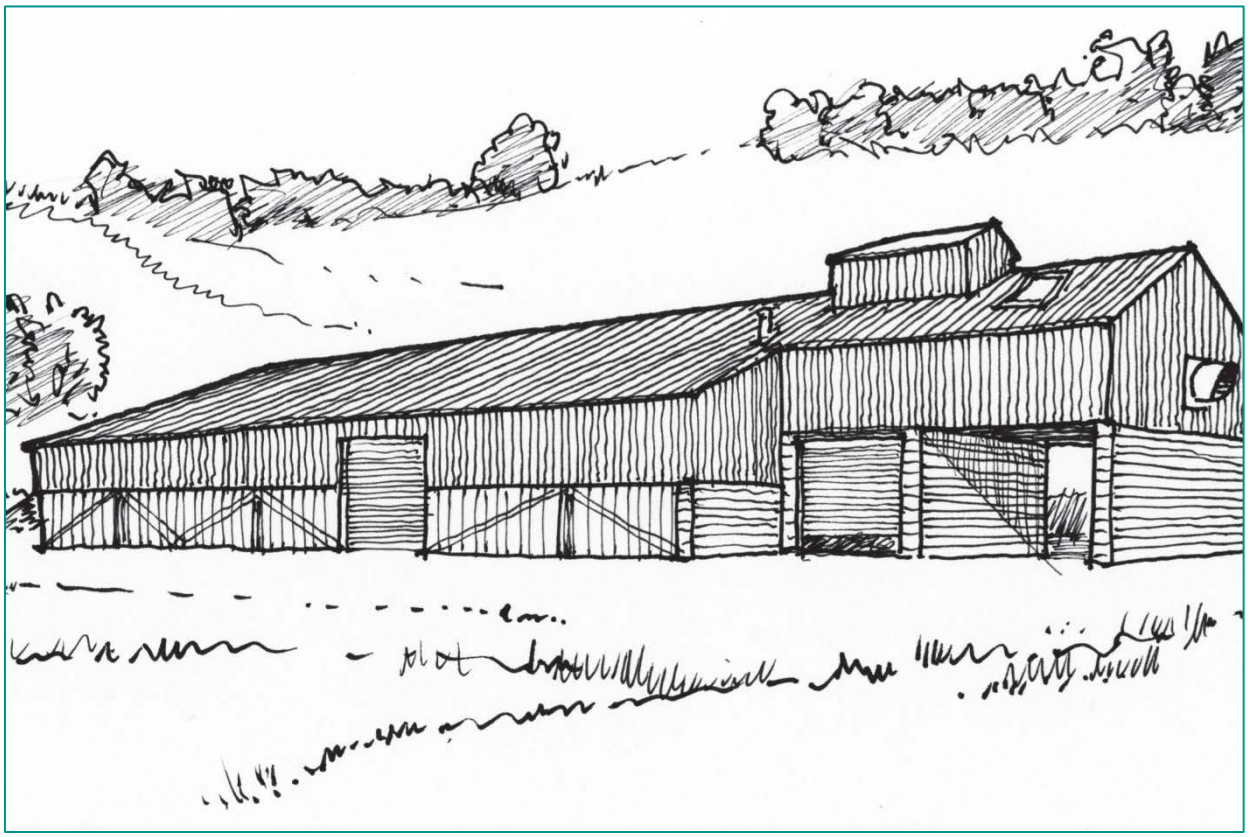

Fig. L1 - Illustration showing how a building is designed to fit into the landscape, situated in the slope of the surrounding countryside.

Materials – A mix of materials, such as a combination of brick work and coloured steel panelling can help to reduce the apparent scale in the landscape and has an attractive appearance. A mix of materials on the walls to break up large areas can very effective, but care should be taken to ensure that it is well proportioned.

Grouping – New buildings should form part of a group rather than stand in isolation. Tightly grouped buildings look more settled in the landscape than scattered ones. Existing buildings can 'hide' new development or provide a basis for extension by indicating which materials to use. There is very often space in and around the existing out buildings to fit another unit without entering into a green field site.

Historic and traditional buildings – In circumstances where a new building is proposed on a site of existing group of traditional or historic buildings, it may be sometimes best to site the new modern building away from the group to avoid visual conflict.

Planting – The use of careful planting of local native species can help to soften the impact of new buildings, helping to integrate them into the wider landscape. Planting may also reflect existing pattern of woodlands, copses and hedgerows can create new landscape features and wildlife habitats.

Artificial, steep bunding of surplus soil is not supported as it creates uncharacteristic changes to the local landscape character, as well as being hostile to new tree planting establishment.

Sometimes the screening of new buildings may be appropriate by means of a broad hedgerow with trees or wider woodland belt, but in other cases planting as a foil or frame for buildings, producing a structural feature linking buildings to the open countryside, may be more appropriate. In some circumstances, the siting of a new building adjacent to existing woods or shelter belts may provide valuable screening and provide an advantageous microclimate for the rearing of livestock or storage of produce. Care should however be taken to not damage root protection areas and canopies.

G3. Siting of new buildings within the Farm Complex

The following considerations should be taken into account when siting a new building within a farm complex:

- Slope
- Shelter
- Trees
- Access
- Drainage
- Security
- Amenity

Slope – Although a flat site may not require significant earthmoving, a sloping site, if not too exposed, may have several advantages:

- Reduce its impact on the landscape;
- Provide shelter and a warm aspect;
- May be less productive land;
- Soil from the excavation works may be used in earth moulding for landscape design;
- Result in ‘stepped‘ buildings which allow for interesting roof patterns.

Shelter – A sloping site offers the opportunity to provide shelter and provides benefits for livestock and working conditions. Buildings should be set at right angles to the slope of the hill, thereby avoiding wind tunnels. Frost pockets should be avoided and protection afforded from snow and rain. Buildings require varying degrees of sun and shade. For example, low temperatures stores and livestock housing will be adversely affected by solar heat and both require shade.

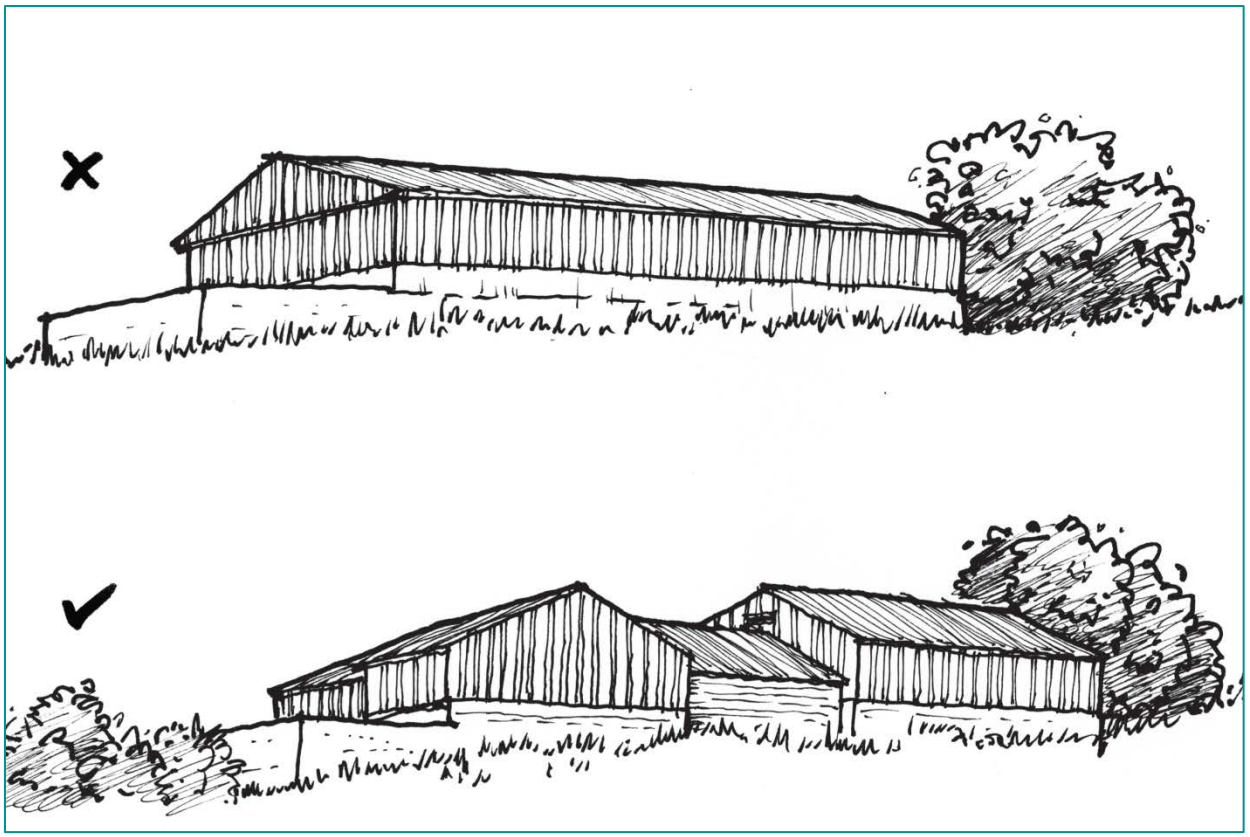

Fig. L 2 - Good and poor examples buildings designed to reduce its impact on the landscape.

Trees – Trees can play a vital role in reducing the visual impact of the building. They can afford a pleasant 'backdrop', softening the effect of a large expanse of roof material. Trees provide a vertical emphasis that contrasts with the horizontal emphasis of modern farm buildings.

Whilst the species list in Part N of this document is a good starting point to find suitable species, the Council is accepting a wider range of species to ensure a greater resilience to increasing number of trees diseases and to adapt to a changing climate. Applicants are advised to choose planting that follows the golden rule of tree selection; 'the right tree for the right site for the right reason'.

Access – Consideration should be given to ensure safe and appropriate means of access to the new buildings from:

- Stock routes;
- Crop collection and distribution;
- Suitable maneuvering space;
- Public highways in relation to milk tankers and grain vehicles.

Drainage – It is important to consider surface water drainage provision and minimise the rate of runoff to that of 'green field' rates. Flood plains and surface water flooding areas should be avoided. Foul drainage provision may also be a consideration where facilities are provided for workers.

Security – The design and layout of new farm buildings should give consideration to maximising security and reducing fire incidents. Isolated buildings should be avoided where possible, unless for special reasons such as isolating pedigree stock prone to disease. Preferably, there should one-gated approach overlooked by the farmhouse. Within the farm complex, sub grouping should be adhered by separated 'clean' and 'dirty' enterprises. For example, clean enterprises should be approached first from an approach road to a farm (eg. farm machinery, farm office, farmhouse).

Amenity – Detailed site and design planning should include consideration of the amenity of nearby dwellings to reduce visual impacts and the effects of noise and smell and associated environmental impacts from farms and livestock such as pests and vermin.

Relationship with other buildings on the site

In designing the site of the new building, its relationship to the existing farm buildings is an important factor. The existing farm buildings should remain the dominant feature in the landscape and new buildings should be carefully sited so that the building(s) form part of the group.

The following considerations should be taken into account:

- Buildings should be integrated into the existing group;
- Isolated or detached locations from the existing site should be avoided

However, it should be noted that these considerations may not be appropriate for listed or traditional buildings. Further guidance on siting of new buildings adjacent to listed or traditional buildings is provided below.

Listed Buildings, historic and traditional buildings

The siting of new buildings where there are listed buildings nearby is particularly important. In cases where the development or alterations are located within the farm complex of listed farm buildings and farmhouses, whole pre-1947 farmstead buildings are considered to be within the curtilage and therefore also (curtilage) listed, meaning all alterations to such buildings will require listed building consent. The existing group of traditional buildings should remain the more dominant element in the landscape and if a new building is to be sited adjacent to existing buildings, it should appear as part of the group. Where there is an existing group of traditional buildings, it may sometimes be best to site a new building of modern design away from the group to avoid visual conflict.

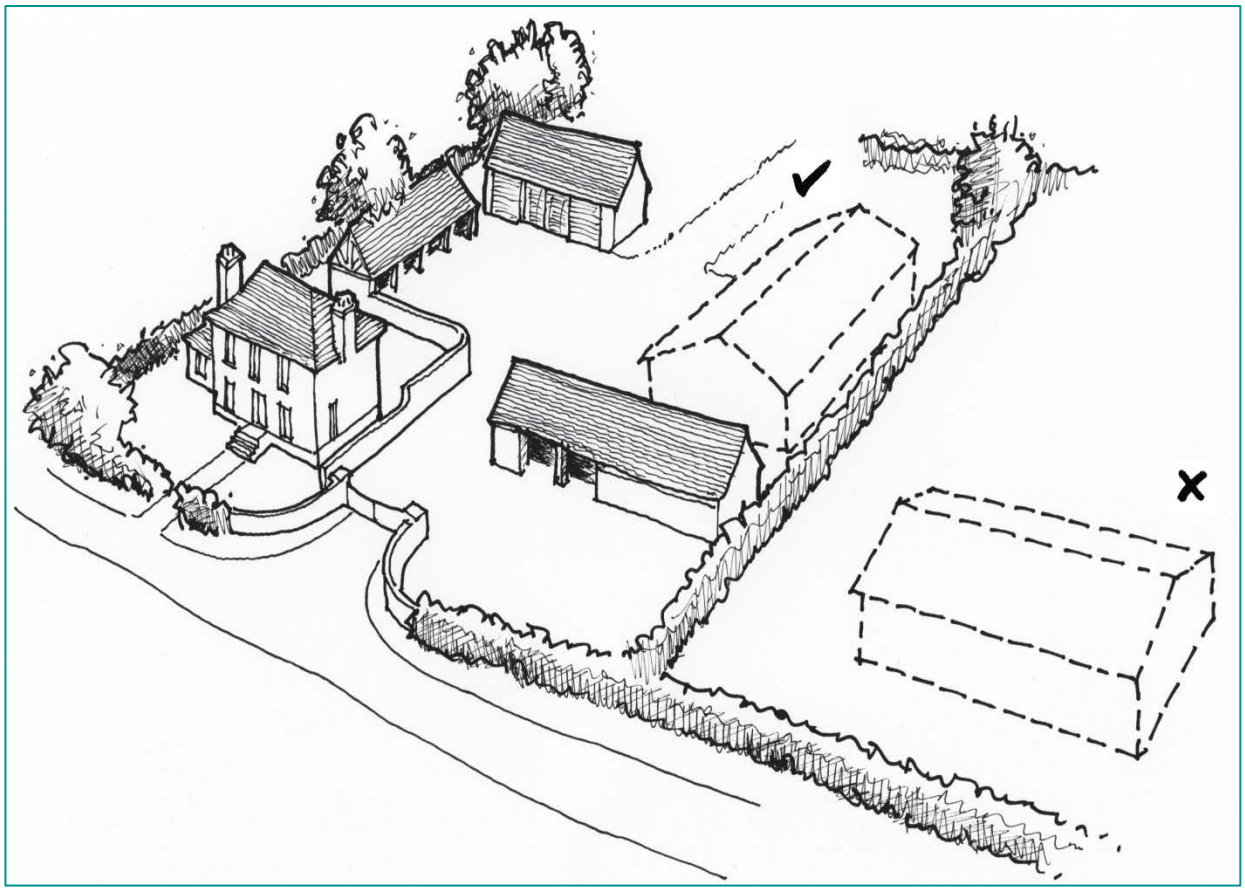

Fig. L3 Good and poor examples of siting new equestrian buildings.

G4. Materials

Local distinctiveness

Diversity and distinctiveness are important parts in our countryside and new farm buildings should play their part in retaining them. The District Council will expect traditional and sympathetic materials to be used in developments within a conservation area and within the setting of a listed building.

Practical considerations

In the past, building materials were used that were closely related to the geology of the area, due to ease of access and cost. However, there are practical considerations when using materials with such a direct connection to the nature of the site, such as;

- Initial costs compared life expectancy of the material;
- Costs and speed of erection on site;
- Short and long term maintenance costs.eg. steel frames must be protected from rusting, timber requires preservation;
- The visual qualities of the materials .e.g. dark or light, smooth or textured;
- Potential for future alterations/extensions or reuse;
- Strength.

Materials in general use in agricultural buildings are described below:

Brick

Using brick has several advantages, including:

- An extensive range of brick enables new brick work to blend into existing buildings;
- Durability and maintenance;
- Useful where strength is required in retaining walls;
- Attractive.

Concrete

Concrete is used either in prefabricated reinforced panel systems or blockwork built into building elevations. Panel systems appear on the elevations of storage buildings and silage clamps, either in horizontal or vertical form, whilst blockwork is used for stock and general purpose buildings. The visual appearance of concrete panels can be improved with coatings and blockwork may be coloured.

Timber

Timber is easy to handle, strong and has a good texture. Attached to walls as spaced boarding, it can provide ventilation and look attractive. Modern preservatives provide a variety of colours and can be easily replaced and re-used. Timber doors can be used as an alternative to steel. Many pre-fabricated pig and poultry buildings are constructed in timber.

Fibre cement

Fibre cement sheet is used extensively for livestock buildings, particularly for roofs. It is relatively cheap, but should not be used where damage is possible from machinery or livestock. It is available in various round profiles and in British Standard colour ranges by surface treatment. Fibre cement sheeting can weather to a dark grey colour in five years.

Metals

Metals are available in a variety of profiles, shapes and colours. Painted or PVC coated materials are available in sheet form with applied coatings. Aluminum is available in louvered sheeting for side end elevations. Metal walling systems can be used for grain and other storages purposes to prevent salmonella.

G5. Design Detailing

Detailing

The adjacent landscape, buildings, walls and gates should be taken into consideration when deciding on detailing. A good spatial design may be ruined by poor fencing, gates, rainwater provisions, inadequate doors and windows. Damage by vehicles is a particular problem of farms. Robust details, protection for the vulnerable elements of buildings and stand-off spaces are all useful.

a) Well-designed rainwater goods can enhance the appearance of a building and care should be taken to ensure that they cannot be damaged by livestock or farm machinery.

Good ventilation is paramount to ensuring healthy conditions for livestock. Ventilation units should be proportionate to the building and careful use of colour can assist in making such units into a design feature. Ventilation comprises two main types:

- Purpose made ventilation units to be mounted on roofs or walls;
- Units sited between upper and lower sections of a wall.

b) The siting and design of doors and windows has a significant impact on the appearance of a building. The size and proportion of the door opening in relation to the surrounding wall requires careful consideration. Large doors on gable ends should be kept well away from roofs to provide an attractive form. Windows are not always necessary as a good amount of light can be achieved from unglazed openings space boarding or electric light. Where windows are required, they should be consistent with the style and size, lining up with one another, where appropriate. The proportions of windows can be chosen to either emphasize or minimise the line of buildings and should be compatible with those in nearby buildings. Sills should be provided to prevent water damage. Roof lights can transform working conditions in a building, but should not dominate the roof or give a checkerboard appearance. A few large roof lights are generally preferable to many smaller ones.

Yards should not be considered solely in terms of agricultural functions, but viewed as an opportunity to integrate the new building(s) with existing areas and landscape. Concrete is expensive and should only be used where essential, e.g. for livestock.

c) Fencing, walls and hedges are important features in the landscape, linking buildings with the landscape. Appropriate consideration should be given to the height and colour of these features to ensure they are not visually intrusive in the landscape and surrounding area.

G6. Equestrian Activities

Where equestrian activities are proposed, it is important that buildings should be of high standard of design and that the following design considerations are taken into account.

- Siting
- Conversion of rural buildings
- Materials
- Stable and shelter size
- Fencing and Screening

Siting

- the siting of new building should be closely related to existing groups of farm buildings, or adjacent to existing natural screening;
- located in a valley bottom or in the folds of hills which are well screened from public view;
- Isolated positions within open fields, where buildings are conspicuous, such on a skyline or podium would be unacceptable.

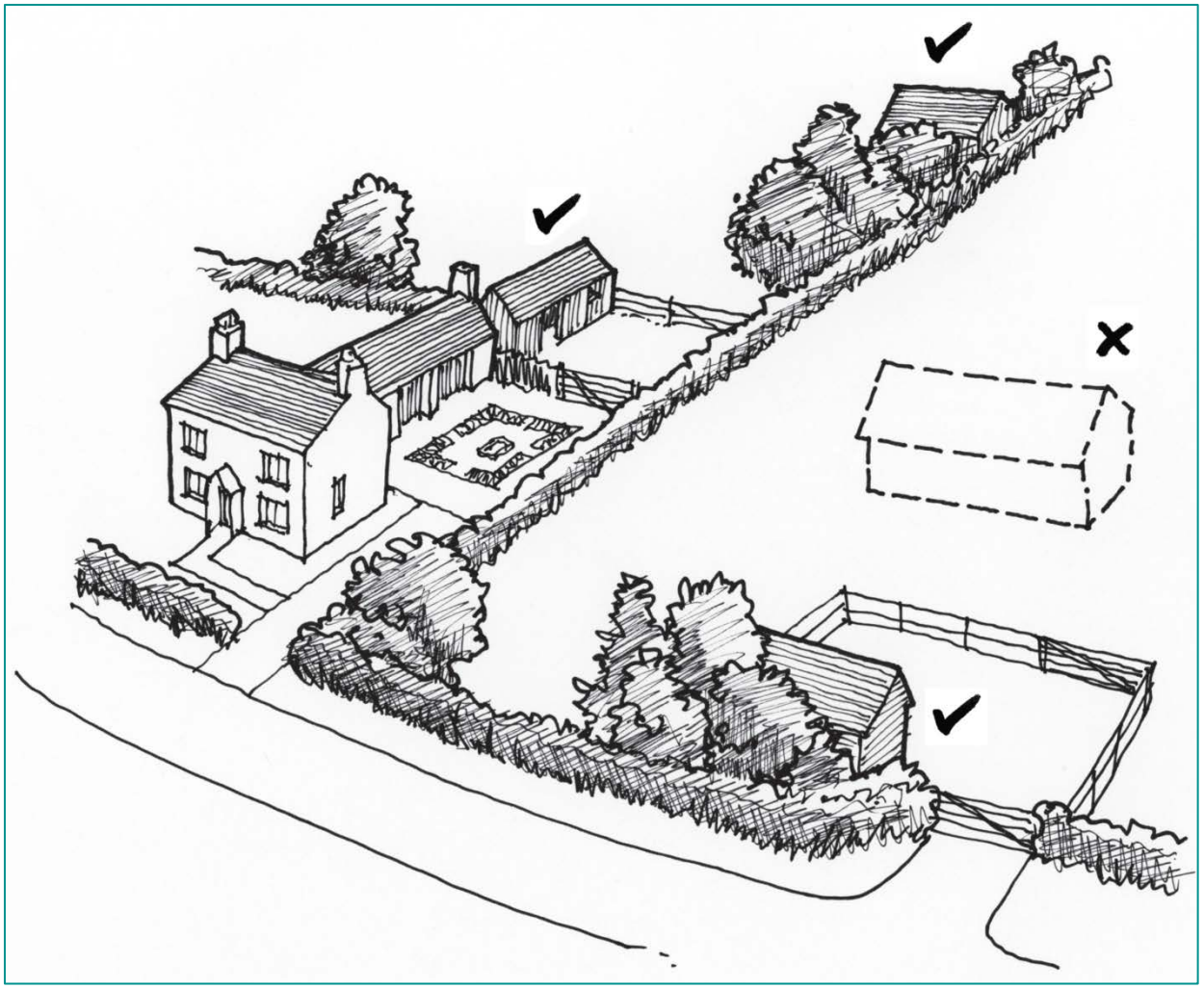

Fig. L4 – Good and poor examples of siting new equestrian buildings.

Conversion of rural buildings

Favourable consideration will be given to the conversion of existing agricultural and other rural buildings to provide stabling. Such re-use helps to reduce demands for new buildings in the countryside.

Materials

Materials used in the construction of stabling should reflect the function of the building and should be traditional/sympathetic to location. The use of stained wood can be acceptable provided that the structure is properly maintained. Stables constructed of brick and tile should reflect the local character of the area and all stables should have pitched roofs in the interests of visual amenity. Doors, window frames and roofs should be dark in tone to reduce the visual impact.

Stable and shelter size

Stable and field shelters need to be of a size that is comfortable for their purposes and to ensure appropriate animal welfare. In general, each loose box within a stable block will need to be from 3m to 5.5m in length and from 3m to 5m in width. Fig 5 below provides an example of a well-designed stable.

An internal clear height ranging from 2.3m to 3.3m will be necessary.

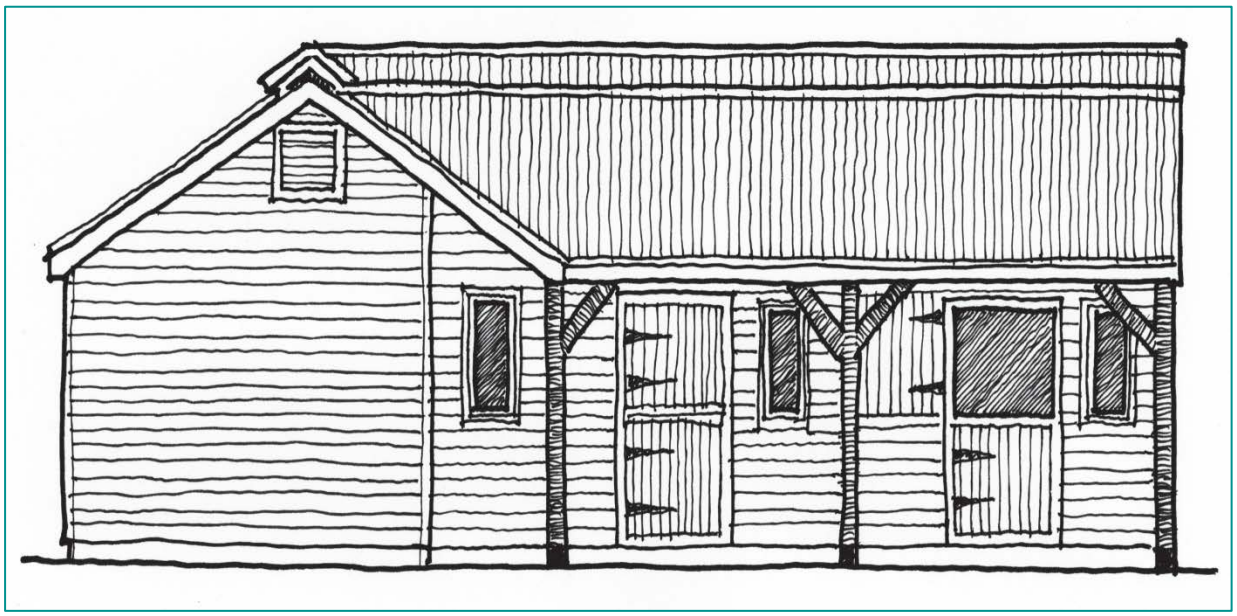

Fig. L5 - An example of a well-designed stable.

Fencing and Screening

The erection of fencing to enclose a paddock or the removal of existing hedgerow can have a detrimental effect on the landscape. Therefore, fencing should be either painted or stained in a dark colour and additional screening should be provided by planting wherever possible. Additional screening will be required if outdoor storage of equestrian related materials is necessary.

G7. Conversion of Traditional Agricultural Buildings

The principle of conversion

The conversion of redundant agricultural buildings is subject to specific policies, including Policies CS.8, AS.10 and CS.20 in the Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy. https://www.stratford.gov.uk/corestrategy

In all cases conversion should involve a minimum of change in order to maintain the agricultural character of the building and its setting.

The acceptability of conversion is dependent on a number of factors including the proposed new use, the location of the building and its construction, the significance of the building in visual or historical terms, the state of repair and structural integrity, the amount of rebuilding, alteration or extension involved, impacts on neighbours, environmental impacts on the users of the building and the presence or otherwise of protected species.

The following principles refer primarily to matters of design in the conversion of buildings.

The setting of the barn

Barns acceptable for conversion are generally found in farmyard settings, often still related to the original farmhouse and other secondary agricultural buildings.

In cases of residential or holiday rental conversion, it is particularly important to avoid creating a domestic, residential feel. Elements such as patios and paths, screen fences, flower borders and swimming pools will not normally be permitted.

Where the original farmhouse remains, the converted barn should remain secondary and subservient to the farmhouse. This is often a matter of simplicity of character rather than relative size.

Within an existing farmyard group, walls and old outbuildings should be retained and repaired in order to screen and enclose domestic items (including, for example, liquid gas or oil containers). The construction of new walls to the same effect may in some cases be acceptable.

If possible, garaging should be provided within existing adjoining structures. New structures modelled on traditional forms and appropriate to the setting in position, form and detail may be acceptable.

In large multi-occupation schemes the garaging should be grouped to form one building.

Some hedging or tree planting is usually desirable. All planting should be suitable indigenous species

Driveways, courtyards and paths should be gravelled. Concrete kerb edging and concrete flags should not be used, though brick or cobbles may be appropriate in some cases.

Farm courtyards as defined by the original buildings should not be subdivided. When garden boundaries are appropriate, they might take the form of brick or stone walls or hedging of a suitable species planted in association with unobtrusive fencing.

G8. Works to traditional agricultural buildings

- Existing structure
- Repairs
- New Structure
- Windows and doors
- Roofs
- External walls
- Extensions

Existing structure

As much as possible of the existing structure should be retained in its original position, including, but not limited to:

- the main wall framing members: storey posts, wall or top plates, sill or sole plates, tie beams and main bracing; main masonry walls; primary trusses or other structural roof elements; wall and wind bracing; stud-work and rafters; brick and stone plinths.

New openings should be placed to keep the loss of original framing or masonry to a minimum. This applies equally to principal structural framing, bearing walls, stud-work, rafters and plinths.

Repairs

Traditional methods involving the minimum loss of original fabric should be the first choice for repair. With timber, for example, if the damage is limited, members should be scar fed or patched. If damage is more extensive, replacement would be preferable. Large areas of patching, facing or resin repairs of timber is unlikely to be acceptable.

Materials used in repairs and replacement must match exiting timber, brick or stone.

In cases where the building is rapidly deteriorating, a programme of immediate repair works may be a condition of planning permission.

New structure

Inserted first floors will often need to be supported by a new independent structure. If it is proposed to construct an inner loadbearing skin to the external walls, then a proper provision for good ventilation of the cavity should be made - especially where the external walls are timber framed.

Other partitions must be made of the same material and construction as the existing walls OR be structurally independent, so as to avoid movement problems.

In threshing barns, a substantial part of the internal volume, preferably that within the midstrey, should be maintained as a full height space (floor to ridge) to retain the open character of the original building.

Permanent internal fittings such as staircases should suit the utilitarian and agricultural character of the building. Detailing of a domestic character, particularly in historic styles, is unlikely to be acceptable.

New structures within open fronts to buildings such as calf or cattle sheds should be lightweight in nature, such as glazing or timber boarding rather than masonry. The rhythm of bays should remain as a strong visual element.

Fig. 6 – An example of well-designed converted barn.

Windows

The arrangement of windows and doors should be suited to the structure of the building. The number and size of windows should be kept to a minimum, the purpose being to provide adequate levels of daylight and not primarily to provide views. Open plan arrangements of internal partitions are likely to provide the best solution for lighting large areas with a minimum of openings.

The preferred location for windows and doors is within existing openings, former openings that have been filled in, panels within timber framing or in areas where the existing fabric is damaged, decayed or has been modified to an extent beyond repair.

The main wagon doors are usually the most obvious location for large windows and external doors. Any original door frame should be retained if possible. The primary structural frame and secondary framing for new glazing and doors should be made of sawn hardwood (elm or oak) and positioned behind any existing frame in order not to compromise the original fabric and to emphasise the opening with a reveal and shadow line. As a general rule, the midstrey entrances should express their former status as wagon doorways either by full glazing or sealing the great doors.

Other new windows should be robust, timber framed, of simple design and should match the framing details of any existing small door or window openings. Manufacturer's standard windows are unlikely to be acceptable particularly those with ‘storm proof’ casements, ‘Georgian’ glazing bars or thin projecting cills.

New doors should be of simple boarded or plank construction. Moulded panel doors and other historic styles are unlikely to be acceptable.

External joinery may be painted or stained or, if oak, left to weather naturally. However, bright paint colours, and ginger and mahogany stains should be avoided.

Roofs

The intention must be to retain the roof profile, form and materials as far as possible. Velux or similar small rooflights may normally be used sparingly but must be of the 'conservation' type and must be set as nearly flush with the roof surface as possible. Over use of small rooflights should be avoided. In some situations relatively large areas of patent glazing may be used. Dormer windows should not be used as they unacceptably disrupt the profile of the roof.

Many barns have had more than one roof covering in the course of their life. Where the roof is of straw, thatch or stone slate, a change of material is unlikely to be permitted. Slate or clay tiles whether original or replacement should also be retained. More recent roofs of sheet metal or asbestos should be replaced with thatch, natural slate or clay tiles, whichever is most appropriate.

External brick chimney stacks are uncharacteristic features on many agricultural buildings, particularly threshing barns, and should only be used in appropriate cases. Where flues are required they should be metal, minimal in size and painted or stove enamelled with a dark matt finish. They should be located in an unobtrusive position. Soil and vent pipes should be taken to discharge at a high level, preferably through a gable rather than through the main roof.

External Walls

Exterior cladding materials should not be changed. Replacement weatherboarding should be of a similar size and profile and must be dark stained. Where barns are partly boarded and partly brick, minor revisions to the area of each material may be acceptable where it suits the structure and character of the building. In particular, original weatherboarding should be retained or replaced - like for like.

Minor external features such as hatches, ventilation, dove and owl holes and penticeboards should be retained and repaired or replaced like-for-like if necessary.

Rainwater goods and downpipes should be unobtrusive and neatly detailed. Preferably they should be metal, not plastic and always be painted in a colour to make them as unobtrusive as possible. If timber troughing remains, it must be retained or replaced like-for-like.

Brick and stone walling should be carefully repaired where necessary with matching reclaimed material and should be repointed with soft lime mortar of appropriate colour.

Extensions

Extensions will not normally be acceptable. Small outshuts or lean-tos in the traditional manner may, however, be acceptable where necessary to link buildings. Domestic porches, other small extensions and conservatories will not be acceptable.

Extensions subsequent to the initial conversion are unlikely to be permitted. Depending on the potential environmental impact of further changes to converted buildings, some permitted development rights may be withdrawn as a condition of planning permission.

Fig.7 below shows the examples of common mistakes made when applicants consider converting or extending a barn.

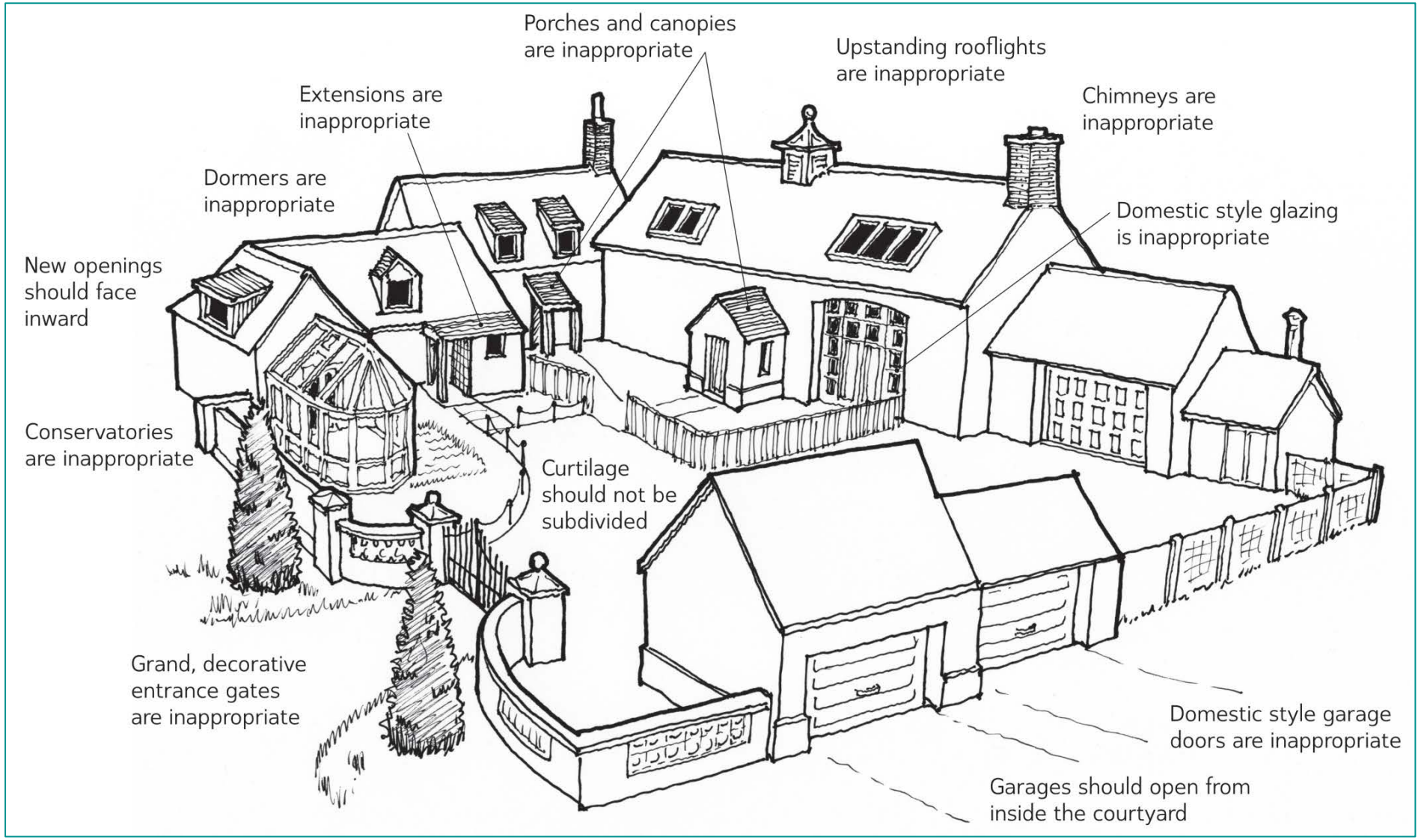

Fig. L7 – Common mistakes made when converting a barn.

G9. Dwellings of Exceptional Quality and Design in the Countryside

Policy AS.10 (j) of the Core Strategy allows the potential for a new dwelling in the countryside which is of exceptional quality and design and makes a positive contribution to the character of the local area. The criteria to assess whether a proposed dwelling accords with Policy AS.10 includes the following:-

That the design should:

- Be truly outstanding or innovative, helping raise the standards of design more generally in rural areas;
- Reflect the highest standards in architecture;
- Significantly enhance its immediate setting; and
- Be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area."