

Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

# Design guide for houses

How buildings and settlements contribute to the character of the Blackdown Hills landscape



**Blackdown  
Hills** AONB

# Foreword

Welcome to our AONB design guide for houses. The Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is truly a special place, with its ever-changing landscape and attractive, traditional villages. The buildings of the Blackdown Hills are an integral part of the patchwork of beauty and heritage which makes the area so special.

This is not chocolate box, stylised countryside – yes, we have the thatched cottages, the high-banked and wild flower-strewn hedged lanes, but also working farms and villages, smells and mess! The advice in this guide can be applied to modern, cutting-edge development or to the restoration of very old houses. It is also forward looking, promoting sustainable construction and sensitivity to climate change – all from the starting point of thinking about the relationship between the landscape and buildings.

Good building design really matters, and decisions made today can help to maintain the quality of our built environment for generations to come. This guide gives homeowners, planners, architects and builders a brief and user-friendly tool for getting it right. It celebrates local building materials such as chert, and guides you through the architectural details which make up the distinctive style of the Blackdowns.

Whether you are involved in building, extending or renovating a house in the Blackdown Hills, this guide will help you to play a part in maintaining the unique character of this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



**Councillor Paul Diviani**  
Chairman, Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership

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# Introduction

This design guide is intended to be of use and interest to anyone involved in the planning, design and construction or alteration of houses in the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It provides guidance on how buildings can be designed to conserve or enhance the distinctive character of the Blackdown Hills.

The traditional buildings and settlements of the Blackdown Hills are an essential and distinctive part of its landscape. To preserve local distinctiveness, the



*The traditional buildings and settlements of the Blackdown Hills are an essential and distinctive part of its landscape*

design of any new building needs to draw on the construction traditions of the area. This does not mean slavishly copying the appearance of traditional buildings, but applying the principles of construction traditions to new and altered buildings – including innovative, contemporary solutions where appropriate. These traditions can be understood by appreciating the area's distinctive buildings and settlements, and how they relate to their setting in the landscape.

## Purpose

The buildings of the villages, hamlets and farms of the Blackdown Hills are as much a part of the character of the landscape as the area's hedges, woodlands and field patterns. It is the occupants of the buildings and their predecessors who created the landscape that we see today. The location, construction and detailing of their buildings is an integral part of the beauty of the area.

If the beauty of the area is to be protected for future generations, it is essential that the character of the Blackdown Hill's traditional, vernacular buildings is understood and respected in both the care of historic buildings and the construction of new ones.

We are also mindful of the need to accommodate change that brings economic and social benefit, and for adaptation to meet the challenge of climate change without eroding the distinctive landscape character and special qualities of the AONB.

In this document we have identified the primary features and characteristics which have helped to create the distinctive qualities of the built environment in the Blackdown Hills. From this, design principles can be applied to new housing developments and individual buildings, conversions, extensions and alterations.

We hope therefore that the guidance will inform and inspire both those undertaking works and those making decisions about development, as well as encourage a greater interest in the built environment and appreciation of the special qualities of the Blackdown Hills AONB.

In summary, the objectives of this design guide are to:

- **Raise awareness of the quality of the traditional built character of the Blackdown Hills AONB**
- **Help identify and protect the distinctive traditional built character of the Blackdown Hills AONB and promote local identity**
- **Inspire high quality design in new developments which respect the traditional built character and wider landscape of the AONB**
- **Provide a co-ordinated and integrated approach to design advice throughout the AONB**
- **Promote sustainability in design and use of resources, particularly locally produced building materials**

## The Blackdown Hills AONB designation

The Blackdown Hills AONB is one of a family of AONBs established in England and Wales under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Along with National Parks, AONBs are 'protected landscapes'

formally recognised as representing the finest countryside in England and Wales, where special policies should apply to safeguard and manage the countryside for the benefit of this and future generations.

The Blackdown Hills were designated as an AONB in 1991. The primary purpose of the designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape; 'natural beauty' is not just the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlements over the centuries.

The Blackdown Hills AONB lies across two counties and four districts. One of the tasks of the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership is therefore to ensure the effort to conserve and enhance the AONB does not vary from one part to another, and between constituent local planning authorities. One of the reasons for producing this guide is to assist these authorities in promoting elements of good design and characteristics of buildings that are commonly found across the Blackdown Hills.



*A new house in the background which draws on the characteristics of its traditional neighbour*

## Planning context

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From a national planning policy perspective, conserving and enhancing the natural beauty and special qualities of AONBs continues to remain a priority. This is reflected in local plan documents produced by local councils.

This design guide is intended to supplement and complement the local development plans and other design guidance produced by local planning

authorities, and does not replace these policies and guidance. Adherence to the design guide does not mean that development proposals will necessarily be approved. Other planning policy considerations may make a proposal unacceptable.

Before considering any work concerning buildings in the AONB contact the local planning department to confirm whether planning permission or other consents, such as listed building consent or conservation area consent, are required. The building control section will be able to advise on building regulations. Contact details are given at the end of the guide.

## Landscape character assessment

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Landscape character assessment (LCA) is a systematic process to understand, describe and classify how the character of the landscape varies from place to place. Such assessments provide a mapped evidence base for making judgements about the landscape and for developing a strategy and guidelines for each area. The Blackdown Hills are covered by Devon's landscape character assessments, which have identified geographically specific county-scale character areas and their divisions into generic landscape character types. Further information is available at: [www.devon.gov.uk/landscapecharacter.htm](http://www.devon.gov.uk/landscapecharacter.htm)

## Community-led planning guidance

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Many local communities have produced their own village design statements and parish plans. These describe the distinctive character of individual villages and the surrounding countryside, and identify design principles which should influence future development in individual settlements. This design guide provides a wider context for the preparation of these local village- or parish-based documents, and will also be very relevant to any communities embarking on a neighbourhood plan.

# Landscape and setting

## Geology

The unique geology of the Blackdown Hills is one of the main reasons for its protected status, and is central to the landscape's appearance and character.

Geology is the key to the area's vegetation, farming and settlement patterns and traditional building materials.

The bedrock of the hills is an extensive outcrop of Upper Greensand. A hard, sedimentary rock, it contains the mineral glauconite which gives it its greenish colour. It also contains nodules of chert, a creamy-coloured quartz stone.

Water percolates through the greensand and emerges along a spring line where it meets less permeable rock below, making springs a feature of the Blackdown Hills. The slope of the bedrock dictates the course of the rivers, which over time have cut deep valleys into the hills.

Settlements tend to be nestled in the river valleys where there is shelter from extreme weather, a ready supply of water, and more fertile soils than on the hilltops.

The overlying sediments create the soils, that in turn dictate the natural vegetation and the types of farming which are most compatible with the area.

A deposit of clay-with-flint on top of the greensand forms the soil of the plateau. Below the greensand are Marl mudstones, used in cob construction. Flints, greensand and chert are all commonly used in traditional local buildings.

The simplified geological cross-section below illustrates how many settlements are located above the spring lines on the valley sides below the greensand hills with their clay-with-flint capping.

## Landscape character

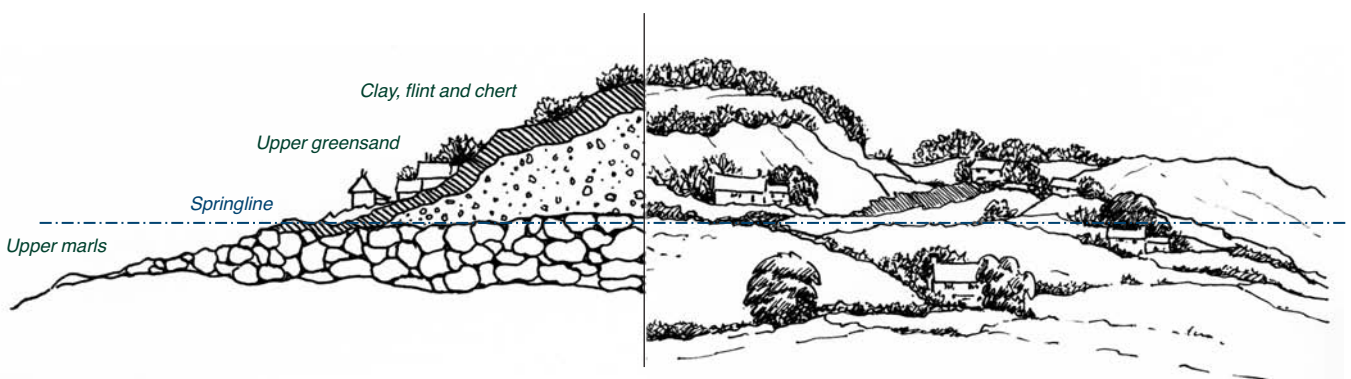
The Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a tranquil, rural, and relatively remote landscape. Elevated, windswept plateaux and ridges give way to steep wooded escarpments to the north and west and broad, deep valleys laid to pasture in the south and east.

The plateaux and ridges are sparsely populated. The area's isolated farms, scattered hamlets and villages are connected by quiet country lanes bounded by hedgebanks.

One of the reasons for AONB designation is that it is a 'landscape with architectural appeal', meaning the individual buildings and settlements blend and fit so well within their broader landscape.

Understanding the distinctions and relationship between landscape and settlements helps to reinforce local distinctiveness and sense of place. Understanding the landscape context, working with the landscape patterns, embracing historic features and important vistas all contribute to good design.

The Devon landscape character assessment has identified five separate character areas covering the entire Blackdown Hills AONB.



*A simplified geological cross-section through a Blackdown Hill*



*Typical landscape in the Blackdown Hills*

## Devon Character Area:

### **Blackdown Hills**

This landscape comprises a central plateau that is elevated, exposed and open in character and fans out into narrow ridges at its edges, where it is fringed by steeply sloping, wooded edges and farmed slopes which descend into river valleys.

The interplay of open, elevated plateau – with its regular enclosure pattern, beech hedges, outgrown beech hedges and pine shelterbelts – the steeply sloping fringes that are cloaked in woodland, and the farmed valleys with small-scale, irregular enclosures of medieval origin, gives this landscape its distinctiveness. The expansive plateau and prominent beech shelterbelts in particular, distinguish this area from the East Devon Central Ridge found further south and east. In places there is a sense of bleakness about the longer views across unbroken stretches of plateau. There are picturesque villages with traditional buildings linked by narrow winding lanes with a very distinctive building tradition that uses local chert with red brick detailing and slate roofs.

## Devon Character Area:

### **East Devon Central Ridge**

This landscape encompasses a narrow, elevated, rolling ridge fringed by steep scarp slopes and upper valley farmland. The main ridge forms a distinctive spine to East Devon, fanning out into a series of

narrow fingers that have distinctive southerly aspect and are flanked to the south by wooded slopes, which give way to small-scale farmland in the upper and tributary valleys of the Axe and Sid. The northern finger of the ridge is within the Blackdown Hills and sits between the upper Otter valley and the Yarty valley.

The river valleys drain southwards, forming steep-sided and often remote-feeling valleys, the sides of which are clothed with ancient oak woodlands. Views from the open upland ridges, particularly in the north, are extensive, often looking over the treetops on the steep, greensand scarps to other ridges beyond and into the visually strong, field pattern of the valley slopes. The area is sparsely settled, with individual farmsteads and small hamlets in the valleys and vernacular buildings mainly of stone and red brick.

## Devon Character Area:

### **Axe Valley**

This area comprises the broad river valley of the Axe and its tributaries, principally the Coly and Yarty. The Axe valley is orientated north-east to south-west and the tributary valleys penetrate as a series of fingers into the ridges to the east and west.

The valley sides have a strong hedgerow pattern with hedgerow trees coupled with small broadleaved woods and occasional farm orchards that give rise to a generally wooded character overall. Land use is mainly pastoral set within small fields in the upper tributary



Map of the Blackdown Hills AONB showing landscape character areas

valleys that are more enclosed and intimate than the main river valley. Moving northwards, there is a more gradual transition from river valley to upland open ridge. A dispersed pattern of farmsteads are scattered across the valley sides, often next to spring lines. The local vernacular includes cob and thatch buildings.

**Devon Character Area:  
Eastern Blackdown Ridge**

This landscape of gently undulating, elevated ridge is similar in character to other Blackdown ridges comprising an open and exposed plateau landscape with regular field boundaries. However it lacks the fringing wooded greensand scarp that characterises the other Blackdown ridges. Instead the edge of the ridge connects directly with the farmed slopes of the upper river valleys. Hence there is a smoother transition between exposed open upland and the

valleys below, and contrasts in landform and land cover are less pronounced.

This landscape has a strong time-depth reflected in its historic enclosures, archaeological sites and settlement pattern, which comprises small hamlets and dispersed farmsteads. The small villages, such as Buckland St Mary and Whitestaunton, are often surrounded by trees and their associated church towers act as landmarks within the open, elevated landscape. There is a strong local vernacular of chert buildings with slate roofs, with more use of Hamstone detailing and local lias than elsewhere in the Blackdown Hills.

**Devon Character Area:  
Blackdown Hills Scarp**

This landscape forms a wide band of scarp woodlands and farmed slopes that are orientated east-west and



face northwards over the Vale of Taunton. Historically this area has divided the counties of Somerset and Devon.

This is a dramatic landscape that is very prominent, particularly in views from the north. It stands out from the land that surrounds it and has considerable visual interest and texture due to its diverse land use and woodland cover. The Wellington Monument, a key landmark, is located on the north-facing slopes that are gently undulating, rising to Staple Hill (the highest point in the AONB). The western end of the scarp is most pronounced – to the east the slopes become broader and gentler. Dense, semi-natural woodland covers the steepest slopes, along with patches of gorse and scrub. There is limited settlement on the steep, scarp slopes; a dispersed pattern of small, spring-line hamlets and farmsteads with associated orchards and little or no modern development.

Further information is available at [www.devon.gov.uk/landscapecharacter.htm](http://www.devon.gov.uk/landscapecharacter.htm)

## Settlement pattern

The area's largest villages are found near river crossings, for example Stockland, Chardstock, Dalwood and Hemyock.

Above the valley bottoms, villages and hamlets are located on the slopes along spring lines.

Elsewhere hamlets and isolated farms have been built where there is ready access to water, some shelter and good soils for farming.

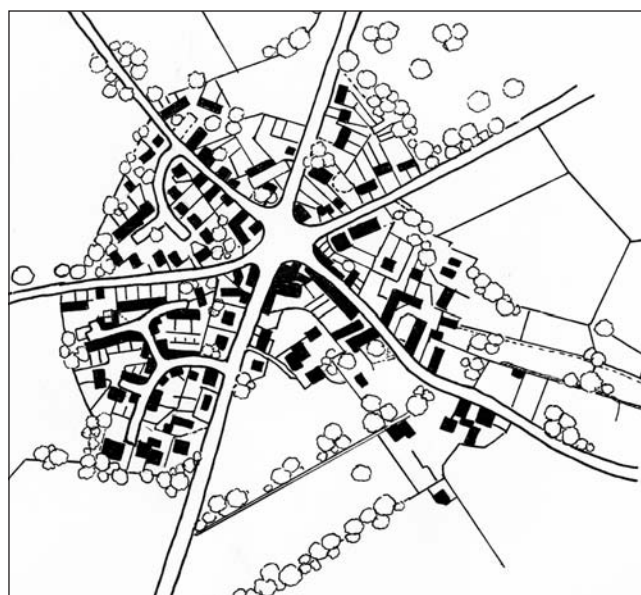
Villages at river or road crossings have developed in a nucleated form, clustered around the focal point of the village, for example Hemyock, Stockland and Churchinford. The existence of an obvious centre such as a crossroads, church or village green, give the village a distinctive character.

Villages that developed along a trade route, river or spring line are linear in form, for example Yarcombe and Luppitt.

Both types of village have their oldest buildings at their core and often focus around their parish church. Buildings near the village centre tend to be tightly packed together with the density of buildings decreasing away from the centre.



*Churchinford, a nucleated village*



*Plan view of Churchinford, with village clustered around central focal point*



*Luppitt, a village that has developed in linear form*

# Built heritage

## Building materials

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Traditional houses have a functional simplicity, built from locally available materials to serve the needs of the agricultural community. The most characteristic construction material in the Blackdown Hills is chert – the stone readily collected from the fields. The extent to which it is used is unique in the UK.

In the Blackdown Hills, chert occurs in nodules with whitish outsides and various shades of grey, brown or yellow/orange within. Generally laid randomly rather than in courses, it gives buildings a creamy coloured, rough textured appearance.

Beerstone and Hamstone from nearby quarries are most commonly used to provide defined features for chert buildings, for example window mullions, door jambs, chimney stacks and gate piers.

Beerstone, from the village of Beer on the East Devon coast, tends to be found as a detail on buildings in the south and east of the area.

Hamstone from Ham Hill near Yeovil in Somerset is found generally in the east and north of the area.

Blue Lias, once quarried locally but now from north of Yeovil, is a soft stone that can be cut but which decays quite rapidly, and so it tends to be used for simple building blocks rather than carved details. It is found as a principal construction material on the east and north side of the area.

Greensand is used where it can be readily quarried, but less often than expected, because it is easier to gather chert from the fields than quarry stone.

Finally, cob is a building material made of local soils. Soil is trampled and turned with straw, then piled up and tamped down to create mass construction walls. Traditionally it was trampled by cattle in a yard but today a tractor with a lifting bucket is usually used. On the Blackdown Hills cob tends to be a brown-red colour due to the use of Marl mudstone soils in the mix. Cob is found everywhere in the area but is most common on the area's west side.

Up until the mid-nineteenth century, the local materials described above were generally used for all buildings



*The most characteristic construction material in the Blackdown Hills is chert*

in the Blackdown Hills. There are remarkably few examples of any alternatives.

Roofs were thatched. Stone walls were generally built of rubblestone, rather than cut stone, and the stones were laid randomly rather than in courses. Randomly laid rubblestone was the quickest and cheapest way of building a wall.

Occasionally a wealthy property owner would pay for stones to be cut and laid in courses or for rubblestone to be coursed. This indicates a high status building.

Cob walls, and sometimes stone walls, were rendered with lime render and limewashed. Limewash was usually off-white as it was coloured by the minerals in the impure lime. Cream or pink rendered walls are characteristic for the area. There is no tradition of brightly coloured limewashes as found, for example, in East Anglia.

Brick, clay roof tiles and roofing slates were not readily available in the area until the arrival of the railways and the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal. Prior to this some bricks may have been made locally and a few wealthy property owners may have been able to afford to import slate by packhorse, but they were not commonly used.

Mass-produced construction materials became increasingly available and affordable from the mid-nineteenth century. An extension of the Bridgwater and

Taunton Canal reached Chard and began operation in 1842. This opened up a supply line for clay roofing tiles and bricks made in Bridgwater, and slates from South Wales. The London & South Western Railway reached Honiton in 1860 and the Bristol & Exeter Railway reached Wellington in 1866.

Brick or slate features found in the Blackdown Hills can therefore be dated with some confidence as post-1842.

## Positioning and form

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The scale, shape and detailing of traditional buildings are controlled by the need to provide shelter from the prevailing weather and by the building materials that are readily available. In the Blackdown Hills the prevailing weather is moderate rainfall, comparatively mild temperatures and south westerly winds. Buildings tended to be constructed in locations sheltered from south westerly winds, orientated towards the sun with steeply pitched roofs to shed rain.

Historically, it was the length of timber available for the beams that controlled the depth of buildings.

Traditional buildings in the Blackdown Hills tend therefore to be only four to five metres deep.

## Historic houses

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### Medieval period to eighteenth century

Houses in the Blackdown Hills built before about 1700 have a narrow, long plan, referred to as a 3-room-with-cross-passage plan. This is common across most of the West Country. Exceptions would have been grand

manor houses and very basic dwellings that have not survived.

It is a plan of three rooms in a line with a front and back door in the long elevations. The doors were directly opposite each other, linked by a passageway through the depth of the house, referred to as the cross-passage.

On one side of the passage was a one room service area and on the other side of the passage was a main room, called the hall. Beyond this was an inner, more private room for the family.

The two outer rooms generally had a first floor but the hall was open to the roof. Until about 1600 the hall of the house was open to the roof because there was no chimney. Smoke rose into the roof from a fireplace in the centre of the hall floor and escaped from vents in the hipped, gable ends of the roof.

Houses were improved from about 1600 onwards by the introduction of chimney stacks. The chimney was located to heat the hall as it was the main room of the house. Most often the chimney stack was built in the hall backing on to the cross-passage.

An alternative location however was to place it on the front elevation of the house. This was done to show the neighbourhood that the owner could afford a new chimney stack.

The insertion of chimney stacks to control the emission of smoke meant that it was now possible to build a first floor over the hall.

Early houses are therefore often recognisable by their long, narrow plan, the position of their chimneys and by their hipped or half-hipped roofs.



*Early farmhouse in the Blackdown Hills with a long narrow plan, typical chimney and roof*

Medieval houses had small, timber-framed windows with shutters rather than glass. The purpose of these was to balance the need to let in light and to conserve heat. Early glazed windows generally had a timber frame with side hung iron casements fitted with leaded lights.

High status houses might have stone mullions and lintels in place of a timber window frame, made from Beerstone or Hamstone.

Later windows had timber frames and casements with timber glazing bars in place of leaded lights.



*Typical single storey lean-to extension at rear*

The basic 3-room-cross-passage plan was frequently extended with a lean-to structure at the rear or side of the house, called a catslide or outshut extension. This tradition has continued with buildings of later periods. Less often, an extra two-storey extension was added to one or both of the gable ends, or as a rear wing.

### **Georgian and Victorian houses (1700 – 1900)**

From the 1700s, houses were built with chimneys as an integral part of their construction. With building stone readily available in the area, hipped roofs were abandoned in place of full height, stone built gable ends that incorporated a chimney stack.

The European fashion at this time was for architecture based on classical proportions. This approach was mixed with the local building style, resulting in the emergence of the highly distinctive Blackdown Hills form of house.

The characteristic Blackdown Hills' house from 1700 until the nineteenth century had a symmetrical front elevation, consisting of a central front door, one window either side of the door on the ground floor, and three windows to light the first floor. It was most often constructed of chert, possibly with Hamstone or Beerstone dressings. It would have originally had a thatch roof but is now more likely to be under a slate roof.

Another house type that developed in the Georgian period, for higher status properties such as rectories and estate farmhouses, was the double pile house. This is effectively two narrow house plans placed back to back.

Georgian houses were often rendered to give the smooth surface finish that was fashionable at the time.

The orientation of windows changed from landscape to portrait to accommodate the vertical sliding sash windows that were introduced to grand houses in the area in the eighteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century these were found even in workers' cottages.



*Characteristic 18th century Blackdown Hills symmetrical house, built of chert with gable ends*

As explained in the section about building materials, the Victorian period saw the arrival of new building materials and building styles that could be readily imported through improved communications and transport systems. From the mid-1800s through into



*Nineteenth century houses in Upottery that combine Victorian detailing with local building stone*

the twentieth century, fashions and style of architecture were drawn upon, yet still fitted with the local building traditions through form and materials.

### **Twentieth century houses**

The rich tapestry of the built heritage was added to throughout the last century by individual dwellings, new farmhouses and small housing developments in villages. Although having a style that reveals their date, in many cases these continued to maintain the local character through scale, simple form and use of materials.

In the second part of the twentieth century houses were often designed without reference to local traditions and constructed using standard detailing and



*Modern houses, Smallridge, reflecting local building styles and materials*

imported materials such as engineered bricks and concrete roof tiles. Houses of different scales and shapes were built, and along with the houses came new layouts such as cul-de-sacs and roads with wide, splayed junctions.

These types of house often do not relate to the area in terms of plan form, scale, location, or materials, weakening the strength of the AONB's distinctive character.

### **Farm buildings**

Historic farmsteads are a key part of the AONB's architectural, agricultural and social heritage. An understanding of a farm building's history and original function will help to achieve a successful conversion or re-use proposal. The setting and group as a whole is often an essential part of the individual building's character.

As well as the farmhouse, farmsteads had a minimum of a storage barn which could also house animals. A large barn is often the oldest building in a farmstead.

As with houses, pre-nineteenth century buildings were constructed of local stone or cob. Some were rendered, some were not. They were a maximum of five metres deep and had thatch roofs.

As farms developed more buildings were often added. Over time, brick, slate and imported stone from neighbouring areas began to be used, and larger buildings were made possible by advances in technology.



*Historic farmsteads are a key part of the AONB's heritage*

# Towards sustainable and distinctive design

The Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership encourages development which draws inspiration from the distinctive architectural heritage of the area to create something new.

This section provides information on the materials, construction techniques and design attributes and considerations which help a new house to fit harmoniously into its surroundings, whether modern or traditional in style.

These guidelines are also intended to help in the restoration, alteration or extension of existing properties.

The importance of context, thinking about how the building will sit in the landscape and its relationship with neighbouring properties, applies whether the style is based on historic references or is contemporary in its use of materials and design.

Traditional local and natural materials can be utilised effectively in modern designs for example, while a visual contrast between a historic building and a new addition can offer an appropriate design solution.



*House under construction in the Blackdown Hills*

## Planning and building regulations

Building work which takes places within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is subject to the same planning legislation and building regulations as elsewhere in England.

Unlike National Parks, AONBs do not have dedicated planning authorities. The planning authority is the

relevant district or borough council. Before embarking on any building or alteration project, contact the local planning department for advice.

Building regulations apply to the construction of all new buildings, extensions and some types of alteration work. Compliance is normally the responsibility of the builder. Contact the building control department at the district council for more information.

The following guidance is intended to encourage sensitive development in the Blackdown Hills AONB. It does not constitute formal planning policy or replace building regulations.

There are contact details for all the relevant authorities at the end of this guide.

### Some general design principles

- **Whether new build or alterations, good detailing, appropriate materials and sensitive treatment of the spaces around buildings are essential elements in achieving a successful and sympathetic scheme.**
- **Locations for new buildings and development should follow the traditional settlement pattern and respect the integrity of historical settlement forms.**
- **Layouts for new development sites should reflect the road patterns and plot forms of the surrounding traditional settlement. It is important to create the same sense of enclosure, traditional proportions and massing of buildings, for example continuing a distinct building line along a street.**
- **Building forms and materials should reflect the local traditions.**
- **New extensions and additions to traditional buildings should respect the character and setting of the original building. Where new buildings are adjacent to traditional ones, consider the group as a whole, using scale, form, colour, and materials to link new and old.**
- **Sensitive design of the spaces around buildings is essential to preserve local character. The most harmoniously designed building can look 'out of place' if it is not properly integrated into its setting.**
- **Contemporary design should draw on the qualities of landscape, historic features and buildings to reinforce local distinctiveness.**

## Sustainable construction

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Construction projects should aim for minimal negative impact on the environment.

When choosing materials and products, consideration should be given to the amount of energy used in manufacture and transport (known as embodied energy), and pollution caused at extraction and processing sites. Ways of addressing this include using local and reclaimed materials wherever possible, using local labour, and choosing materials that are environmentally certified, such as FSC timber. For example, traditional building materials such as chert, cob and timber, which contribute so much to the quality of Blackdown Hills buildings, tend to have low levels of embodied energy since they often involve minimal processing and are sourced locally.

Energy use in dwellings is considered further in the section on domestic energy.

The building process should be planned to cause the least possible damage to the immediate environment. This may mean carrying out work at certain times of the year to avoid disturbing nesting birds or damaging trees for example.

## Orientation and passive solar gain

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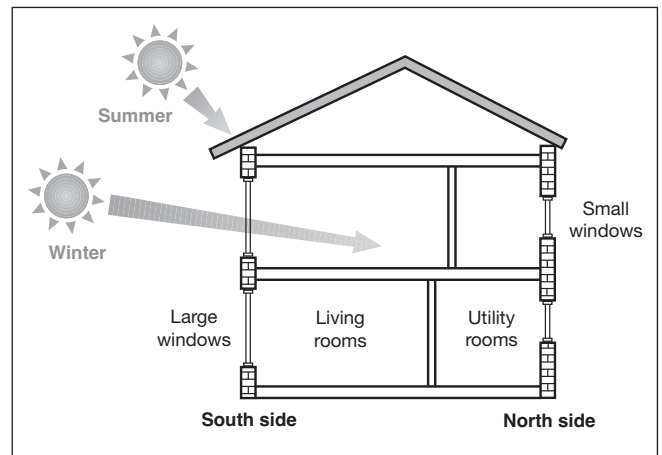
Prior to the twentieth century houses were designed to conserve energy. They tended to be orientated towards the sun and to have small windows to keep in what heat was being generated by an open fire or range. Today, the importance of reducing carbon output means that these old design principles are relevant once again.

Capturing warmth from sunlight to help heat a building is known as passive solar gain. This should be exploited wherever possible within an appropriate design.

Where practical, the longer elevations of a house should be orientated towards the sun and the principal rooms placed on the sunny side of the house. In a development of more than one house, there needs to be a balance between optimal positioning for passive solar gain, and a layout which fits in with the character of the area.

A design with a significant amount of south-facing glass should only be proposed if the appearance is in keeping with the character of the area and the heat

dynamics are fully understood. Over-heating can result in excessive energy consumption because of the need for air conditioning.



*Passive solar gain – the main habitable rooms (living room, bedrooms) should face south and have larger windows to capture heat and light with bathrooms and kitchen for example being sited on the north elevation*

## Position

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The majority of traditional houses on the Blackdown Hills are set close to the road, either parallel to the road or gable end on. The gable ends of houses are frequently extended to become low garden walls giving a characteristic sense of enclosure along lanes and in villages and hamlets.

New buildings should have a similar relationship to the road as their neighbours, to avoid gaps in the village street-scene or an uncharacteristic set-back. It is possible with careful design to position a new house in the traditional way, and still provide parking.



*The gable ends of houses are frequently extended to become low garden walls giving a characteristic sense of enclosure along lanes and in villages and hamlets*



*New properties (centre and right) fit into the street scene by having similar proportions to older neighbours (left)*

## Size and scale

A two-storey house design with a narrow plan and gable ends is most likely to fit in with the character of the area.

Houses in the Blackdown Hills tend to be relatively small in scale. It is important that the overall mass of a new property does not overpower its neighbours. One way of achieving this is to break up the form of the building with a one or two storey wing additional to the main body of the house. This could take the form of the traditional catslide extension.

A new property should have similar ridge and eaves heights to its neighbours, and windows and doors should also be of a similar size.

## Building materials and methods

As set out in the Built heritage section, typical building materials are greensand, chert, flint and cob, any of which might be rendered and limewashed. These are augmented by stone from neighbouring areas. Using the palette of Blackdown Hills' materials can help new houses be in keeping with the character of the area. It is also more fuel efficient to use local materials in construction.

With careful handling, locally distinctive features can be incorporated into the design of new development to help it blend into its setting, for example red brick detailing is common in Hemyock while buff-coloured brick can be seen in Buckland St Mary and Bishopswood.

Modern insulation and damp proofing standards require up-to-date building methods, but these can be combined with traditional materials to create buildings with character.

Local stone may be used to face a timber-framed or blockwork house. Blockwork can be rendered with traditional lime.

Concrete blocks with in-set flint or chert are readily available but must be carefully chosen and handled to avoid a heavily-banded appearance, which is not a local characteristic. The random rubble appearance of a traditionally constructed building is desirable.

Cob is a versatile material and can be used for new buildings and extensions.



*Flint with stone detailing, typical building materials in the Blackdown Hills, in this example laid in courses*





*Concrete blocks with in-set flint or chert are available but must be carefully chosen and handled to avoid a heavily-banded appearance*

All traditional materials tend to be repairable and recyclable and take less energy to produce than plastic or cement-based alternatives. Although they can be expensive, they generally have greater longevity if maintained properly. It is recommended that builders and craftspeople with specialist experience are always employed when working with traditional materials.

## Render and mortar

The pointing of rubblestone buildings has as great an impact upon the appearance of the building as the stone itself. The mortar colour and profile should match closely that of neighbouring vernacular buildings, with careful consideration given to the ratio of mortar to stone and joint widths. Wide joints or excessive pointing which dominate the appearance of the stone should be avoided.

Lime mortars and renders are reusable, less environmentally damaging in their production than cement, and can be sourced locally. They allow a building to breathe and do not crack with movement.

Lime render is a characteristic finish for both cob and rubblestone walls. In the Blackdown Hills, lime render should be applied in soft shades of cream and pink.

## Windows and doors

The appearance of a building is strongly influenced by the positioning, size and design of the windows. Houses in the Blackdown Hills tend to have comparatively small windows with multi-paned frames. Window styles and sizes should be designed appropriately in the setting of neighbouring houses.

Side-hung casements work best for small, square windows and landscape aspect windows. Taller windows of portrait aspect may be better fitted with vertical sliding sashes. The setting of the frame within the window reveal is also important, and the depth should be based on neighbouring vernacular houses.

Doors too are significant features and the proportions, material and finish of external doors in new houses are important considerations. In historic buildings the style of door should suit the style and period of the house.

The production of uPVC is an energy intensive process, and products are difficult to repair and ultimately recycle (although advances are being made in this). Timber from sustainable sources is therefore preferred for frames and doors and, if well maintained, will have a longer lifespan than uPVC. Wood also provides a more characteristic and balanced appearance. Both windows and doors are traditionally painted, rather than using wood stain.

In some more modern properties though, replacement energy efficient uPVC units may be appropriate in place of draughty, single-glazed windows.



*Blackdown Hills' houses tend to have comparatively small windows with multi-paned frames*

## Roofs

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Steeply pitched, gable end roof structures are the most common form. Slate, pantiles, occasionally plain tiles and thatch are the typical roofing materials. The shape, size, pitch and colour of the roof are important elements of a building, the street scene and wider landscape setting, and are important factors to consider if the building is very visible.



*Characteristic gable end roof under modern slate*

Thatch is particularly characteristic in some parts of the AONB – Broadhembury is a notable example. Thatched roofs offer a particular insight into historic building practices and should be maintained and repaired. Thatch also offers a sustainable material for new build. The local style traditionally used combed wheat reed with a flush ridge and simple rounded eaves.



*Thatched houses at Broadhembury*

Dormer windows can traditionally be seen on smaller properties where the upper floor takes up some roof space. Usually small, restricted in number and sited low down on the roof, they have swept or gabled roofs. On new or extended properties they should relate to the design and materials of the building and to the size and position of existing windows.

## Guttering, downpipes and bargeboards

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Eaves details should be plain and simple with a thin fascia board flush to the wall. Traditionally, gutters are supported on wall-mounted brackets rather than attached to a timber fascia board. Traditional gutters and downpipes are made of cast iron. Powder-coated aluminium is a cheaper alternative and is more similar in appearance to cast iron than uPVC. Dark coloured gutters and downpipes are generally less obtrusive.

During the nineteenth century bargeboards were introduced as a design feature, often with ornate styling. They are appropriate for some Victorian buildings but are not generally a typically characteristic feature.



*Plain and simple fascia board with dark coloured gutters and downpipes are generally less obtrusive*

## Chimneys

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Chimneys are usually internal at the gable end of houses. In the case of an historical building, the chimney stack is likely to be an integral part of the design and attractive features in their own right. New houses can be provided with working chimneys so that it is possible to install a heating system which burns



*This Victorian house in Bishopswood shows that chimney stacks can be interesting features in their own right*

wood fuel. Chimneys can be used as a convenient location for boiler flues or for ventilation intakes and extracts; however it is better to avoid false chimneys without a function.

## Extensions to existing houses

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Generally extensions should fit in with the character of the existing building and should not overpower it. The roof structure, eaves and ridges of the extension should complement the existing building. Construction materials may be the same or may complement the existing structure. For example, render or weather boarding could be placed next to rubblestone, or slate next to thatch. Windows should generally be of similar size and proportion to the existing house.



*Complementary materials such as render or weather boarding may be suitable for extensions*

Porches or simple canopies can be found on a variety of houses, built to shelter the main door from the weather. Generally small, simple structures that mirror the main building, a porch should not dominate the elevation of the property. Within settlements or a group of houses it is worth considering the appearance of a new porch in relation to neighbouring properties or the overall street scene.

Conservatories can have a useful role in passive solar gain but to benefit the dynamics must be understood as they can both gain and lose heat rapidly. Modestly sized, simple rectangular designs of timber, or timber and stone construction with sloping or gable roofs at the rear of a property generally fit a building's character best.

## Conversions

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Some old farm buildings have become redundant as farming practice has changed. Even though they may not be specifically protected, most traditional farm buildings are historic assets, particularly the many intact small farmsteads of the Blackdown Hills. The setting is often an essential part of the building's character.

Most traditional farm buildings are simple, functional structures built from local materials with small window openings and minimal decoration. Successful conversions respect and reflect the building's original functions and maintain the agricultural character and

historic elements on the outside and inside. The layout of the existing building will impose limits on what is achievable.



*Successful conversions respect and reflect the building's original functions*

## Hedges and boundaries

Boundaries around properties in the Blackdown Hills are traditionally demarcated with rubblestone walls or hedges and hedgebanks planted with species commonly found in the area such as oak, ash, beech, hazel, hawthorn and blackthorn. Cob walls and iron railings are also occasionally used. Mass-produced fencing and decorative concrete blocks are not typical and have a disproportionate impact on character.

While the traditional methods of enclosing space may initially be more costly or take longer to establish, they have greater longevity and are fundamental in helping to maintain the character of an area, and will help to 'anchor' new development into its surroundings.

The maintenance and repair of boundary walls or the erection of new ones has very similar considerations to the walls of buildings. The style of capping used on a wall can contribute much to local distinctiveness.

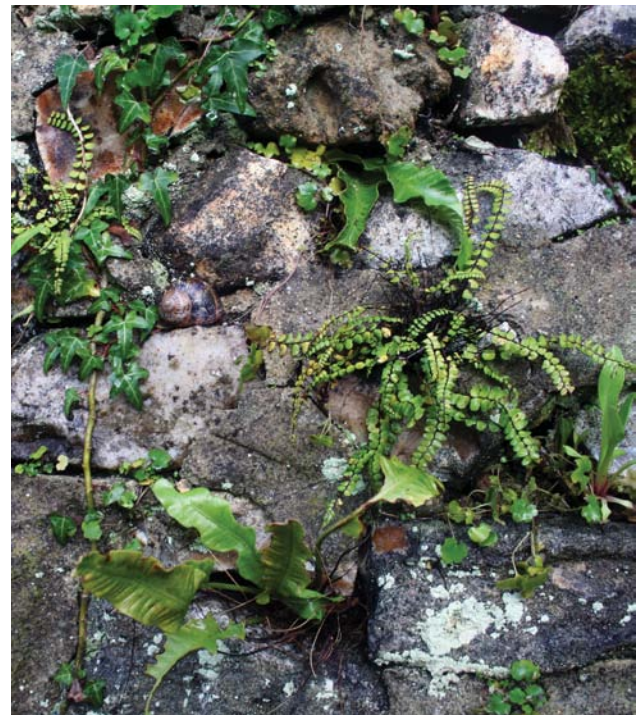


*The style of capping used on a wall can contribute much to local distinctiveness*

## Nature conservation

New developments should look for opportunities to make a positive contribution to the natural environment. As well as any steps that may be required to protect certain species – all bats and nesting birds are protected by law – proposals should aim to encourage wildlife.

Features to encourage birds and bats can be easily installed on new or existing buildings. Hedgerows and trees provide shelter, feeding and nesting sites for a variety of species and act as wildlife corridors. Stone walls also provide valuable wildlife habitats.



*Stone walls provide valuable wildlife habitats*

## Roads, entrances and driveways

The design and detail of new roads in small housing schemes is critical in determining the character of new developments, from the overall layout and road pattern to design of junctions and detail of road surfacing.

New roads and driveways must meet highway planning requirements. However there is some flexibility within the legislation for non-standard layouts to be adopted, as long as it can be shown that vehicles can negotiate them without an unsafe level of risk.

Through careful design and discussion with highway advisors, it is possible to come up with a sensitive design that features, for example, a narrower driveway or tighter curves.



*A simple entrance and drive in a rural setting helps a house to blend in to the landscape*

A well-designed drive blends into the setting and helps a house look appropriate in the landscape. Wide entrances, sweeping corners and large areas of tarmac or block-paving can result in an appearance which is out of character.

Driveways and external spaces can play an important role in mitigating flooding problems. The use of permeable surfaces rather than tarmac, blocks and slabs can reduce large amounts of surface water run-off as rain can soak into the ground.

Entrance gates should reflect the location – the appropriate solution will differ between a rural setting and one within a village. Gates should be simple, either reflecting the boundary style or typical farm gates in the area. Stone or timber gateposts are also traditionally simple, robust structures. Ornate, high and solid gates are out of place with the traditionally simple building form.

## Lighting

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If external lighting is installed it should only light a specific area such as a drive or parking area and not the wider countryside. Directional cowls should be fitted to stop or limit light spillage, lights should be directed downwards not upwards. Lower wattage bulbs can be used and lights should be fitted with timers and passive infra-red detectors to ensure that they are only on when needed.

These steps will help to preserve the AONB's dark starry skies, and avoid disturbance to wildlife and neighbours. Information to help minimise light pollution from homes is available on the Blackdown Hills AONB website.

# Domestic energy

## Energy conservation measures

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A key consideration for the maintenance, management and alteration of existing properties and the construction of new properties is energy and resource consumption. Changes to old buildings and the construction of new ones should be carried out in materials that have as low as possible impact upon the environment and introduce features that help occupiers of the buildings to minimise their consumption of energy, particularly energy from carbon emitting, finite, fossil fuels.

The use of microgeneration energy installations: photovoltaic units, solar thermal units, wind turbines and ground, water and air heat source units are ways in which property owners can seek to reduce their consumption of fossil fuels. However, these installations can be highly visible in the landscape and street scene, sometimes significantly changing the appearance of a building or its setting.

As a first step it is advisable to consider measures to reduce energy use and improve energy efficiency before thinking about renewable energy installations.



*Sheep's wool makes ideal insulation material*

## Traditional versus modern building construction

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A significant number of the buildings on the Blackdown Hills were constructed before 1900. These houses would not have been built with cavity walls, damp proof courses, insulation, central heating systems or double

glazed windows. They are buildings that function closely with the environment in that they allow a little damp in but, by virtue of the draughts that also get in, the damp is generally dispersed into the atmosphere and no significant damp problem should arise.

Modern buildings with insulation, damp proof courses, and other methods work in a different manner; their aim is to exclude damp and cold and to have very little connection with the external environment. Modern buildings are required to operate on a near airtight basis. To attempt to make a traditional building function as a modern building by trying to make it impermeable to damp and cold can result in huge damp problems.

It is virtually impossible to keep damp from penetrating through the walls of a solid rubblestone, cob or brick building. If damp does inevitably get in and cannot escape because of newly fitted double glazed windows, draught proofing and the loss of the open fire, then it will remain as damp within the building.

A good understanding of the way that a traditional building works is therefore required before any intervention is made. This may include rainwater goods efficiently discharging run-off away from the house so avoiding the house sitting in a 'puddle', avoiding insulation that traps damp in walls and doors and windows that entirely eliminate air movement.

It is advisable to discuss matters such as damp proofing and insulation with a surveyor experienced in the care of traditional buildings prior to implementing any changes to ensure that they will achieve the end goal rather than adding to any problem.

Nevertheless, there are some simple measures that can be taken to help conserve energy in all houses.

## Methods of conserving energy

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### Insulation

The loss of heat through the roof is significant and the laying of insulation material in the roofspace between the ceiling joists is a simple procedure as long as the eaves ventilation to the roof is not blocked off. In traditional buildings it is desirable for the insulating

material to be vapour permeable to allow any damp that has got in from outside and vapour from activities in the building such as cooking and washing to be able to pass through. Hemp and sheep's wool insulation are ideal for this.

It is a straight forward procedure to insulate cavity walls too, and wooden floors can be insulated where appropriate.

### **Draught proofing**

Draught proofing of doors and windows and openings such as letter boxes will go a long way to help remove the chill feeling caused by draughts. Shutters and thick curtains are a traditional and effective way of draught proofing. There are specialist companies that repair and draught proof, for example, sash windows so that they still operate effectively but let in a lot less unwanted air.

If vapour producing rooms such as kitchens and bathrooms are effectively draught proofed then mechanical ventilation in the form of a fan may be required to remove the damp air from the room.

### **Windows**

In older houses built with single glazed windows, their replacement with double or triple glazing will undoubtedly make the house feel warmer and reduce energy loss but it may not always be a viable option in historic buildings or on cost grounds. Thick curtains, shutters and secondary glazing are alternative, cheaper, energy conservation measures that could be considered.

### **Pipework insulation**

Insulate all pipes to ensure that heat gets to where it is wanted rather than being lost under floors or in roofspaces.

### **Efficiency of existing heating system and household appliances**

Check the existing heating system to see whether it is working as efficiently as possible, or look at the cost of fitting a more fuel efficient boiler. Change to low energy bulbs, and energy efficient household appliances.

### **Domestic renewable energy**

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Separate guidance is available which assesses the constraints and opportunities for renewable energy in the Blackdown Hills. It contains a description of

different technologies and consideration of costs and carbon saving. It also provides an overall assessment of the potential landscape impact. It is available at [www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk](http://www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk).

This guidance therefore focuses on providing some simple advice on ways to reduce any impacts from household microgeneration installations in relation to the immediate built environment.

You should contact your local planning authority before undertaking any work to establish whether planning permission or listed building consent is required for your specific proposal and seek advice on building regulations requirements.

### **Photovoltaic and solar hot water**

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There are two types of solar panel. Photovoltaic (PV) panels or tiles generate electricity from the sun's energy. Solar panels or collectors use the sun's radiation to heat water. [Note that reference here to 'panel' is intended to refer to the technology and covers the increasingly wide choice of products including PV tiles and slates.] Both work best facing south at an angle of 30-40° and located to avoid shadowing from chimneys, trees or neighbouring properties for example.



*PV and solar panels installed on an older property*

New developments offer the opportunity to consider the inclusion and siting of solar panels as part of the overall design. PV panels are available in different colours and a range of designs that can be used to provide a contemporary design or match more traditional materials and finishes. Increasingly solar heating collectors are becoming available that can be incorporated into a new or existing roof in much the same way as rooflights. Panels should be flush with the roof to minimise contrast.

Consideration of the positioning of panels can help to minimise any visual impact by retaining the balance and appearance of a house, for example by lining the panels up with windows and matching the size of the panels to existing features.

Outbuildings or extensions can provide good locations that have minimal effect on the overall building, or free-standing panels within the garden may offer a good solution, especially in the case of older vernacular buildings.

## Wind energy

Even small wind turbines can have visual impacts on sensitive landscapes. There may be important views to consider from settlements, public access land, public rights of way and other public vantage points.

Developments that break skylines can have more significant landscape impacts, so consider siting a turbine on lower slopes rather than on hill tops. Impacts can also be minimised if a turbine is set against a backdrop of trees or group of buildings.

Landscape impacts can be reduced by the choice of a suitable colour for the turbine and its pole. Examples are the use of semi-matt off white or light grey to blend with the sky or dark grey or black to blend with hills and trees. If possible cables connecting a turbine to the dwelling or grid should be put underground.

Consider the likely noise that a turbine will make so that any impacts on the tranquillity of neighbouring properties and surrounding countryside can be assessed. Check to make sure that the turbine shadow will not cause a flicker effect on neighbouring windows.

Consider the height of the turbine in relation to any adjoining buildings and try to ensure that it is in proportion and consider design issues such as colour, reflectivity and size. If mounted on a building a turbine fixed to the gable end will minimise the length of the pole.

The main species likely to be affected by turbines are birds and bats. Many birds and all bats are protected by law. Specialist advice should be sought if bats are known to be present and it may be that a wind turbine is not the best option. Bats tend to occupy old buildings and trees and will often fly along hedgerows and other natural corridors. This should be considered in choosing an appropriate location for a turbine.

## Heat pumps

Ground source heat pumps use a buried ground loop which transfers heat from the ground into a building to provide space heating, generally with under-floor heating, and sometimes to pre-heat hot water. Water source heat pumps use temperature differences in a similar way to extract heat via a heat exchanger. Air source heat pumps are mounted directly on an external wall to make use of the ambient air as a heat source.



*Air source heat pumps are mounted directly on an external wall to make use of the ambient air as a heat source*

Before digging trenches to install ground source heat pumps, check with the county council archaeology service to ensure there are not likely to be any archaeological remains that would be damaged by the works. Consider also whether the work may cause damage to a habitat that is of high wildlife value. In such cases it could be better to install the pipes vertically using a borehole.

Using heat exchangers in water bodies such as ponds and lakes could lead to ecological impacts through localised temperature changes and specialist advice should be sought.

The main issue with the installation of air source heat pumps is the siting of a heat exchanger on the outside of the building. It should be positioned carefully to avoid detrimental impacts on the building, particularly if it is listed or in a conservation area. It is worth considering detailed design issues such as fixings, colour, reflectivity and size. To avoid problems of noise nuisance it is also worth bearing in mind the likely noise that a pump will make.



## Glossary

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**Bargeboard** – a timber piece fitted to the outer edge of a gable to protect roof timbers from the weather, sometimes carved for decorative effect

**Casement** – A window frame hinged on one side so that it swings out or in to open

**Catslide** – A roof with a break in pitch, the lower section being a lower angle than the upper. This might be found where a roof line is extended from a two storey building down over a single storey extension

**Chert** – a hard, creamy coloured type of quartz stone formed in the upper greensand bedrock and traditionally used extensively for building in the Blackdown Hills

**Chimney stack** – the part of the chimney breast visible above the roof

**Cob** – a traditional mixture of earth, sand, straw and water pressed together to form the walls of a building

**Cut stone** – building stone that has been chiselled or worked into a desired size and shape

**Door jambs** – a pair of vertical posts or pieces forming the sides of a door frame

**Eaves** – the eaves of a roof are its lower edges, usually projecting beyond the walls of the building to provide weather protection

**Embodied energy** – the energy used (and therefore the CO2 emissions) in manufacturing, packaging and transporting a product, material or service

**Fascia** – the vertical board under the lower end of the roof to which the guttering can be fixed

**Gable end** – the triangular portion of walling between the edges of a sloping (pitched) roof and the wall below it at the end of a ridge roof

**Gate piers** – a column or pillar of brick or masonry to which the hinges of a gate are attached

**Half-hipped roof** – a roof finishing at a gable end where a small section of the top part is angled or hipped, the rest vertical

**Hipped roof** – a roof without gable ends so it slopes at the ends as well as the sides

**Landscape** – the character and appearance of land, including its shape, form, ecology, natural features, colours and elements and the way these components combine

**Lime mortar** – one of the oldest forms of mortar, used to bind construction blocks, composed of lime, an aggregate such as sand, and water. Unlike modern cement, it is breathable and slightly flexible, making it particularly suitable for buildings of traditional construction

**Lime render** – a lime-based, cement-like mortar applied to the external walls of stone buildings. In contrast to modern cement-based mixes, it is porous and allows the masonry to breathe

**Lime wash** – a traditional low cost paint based upon lime and water

**Lintel** – a horizontal beam over a door or window opening that is carrying the weight of masonry or brickwork

**Local distinctiveness** – the positive features of a place and its communities which contribute to its special character and sense of place

**Mass construction walls** – a method of constructing a stone, brick, or cob wall where the weight of the roof is transmitted to the ground continuously along the length of the wall. In comparison, with frame construction the weight is focused on posts positioned along the length of the wall

**Pointing** – mortar joints between masonry blocks or bricks

**Ridge height** – the highest part of the roof structure

**Rubblestone** – irregular, variable sized and shaped building stone

**Scale** – the impression of a building when seen in relation to its surroundings, or the size of parts of a building or its details, particularly as experienced in relation to the size of a person

**Soffit** – the underside of eaves or other projection

**Spring line** – a line of springs along the sides of a valley, as a result of a change in the underlying geology

**Vernacular** – the way in which ordinary buildings were built in a particular place, making use of local styles, techniques and materials and responding to local economic and social conditions

**Wall capping** – weatherproof finish along the top of a wall, often decorative and formed of stone, slate, tile or brick

**Window mullion** – vertical dividing structure in a window frame

# Contacts and further information

## Local authorities

For planning, building control and building conservation:

### East Devon

#### District Council

Council Offices  
The Knowle  
Sidmouth  
Devon EX10 8HL  
Telephone: 01395 516551  
[www.eastdevon.gov.uk](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk)

### Mid Devon

#### District Council

Phoenix House  
Phoenix Lane  
Tiverton  
Devon EX16 6PP  
Telephone: 01884 255255  
[www.middevon.gov.uk](http://www.middevon.gov.uk)

### South Somerset

#### District Council

Council Offices  
Brympton Way  
Yeovil  
Somerset BA20 2HT  
Telephone: 01935 462462  
[www.southsomerset.gov.uk](http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk)

### Taunton Deane

#### Borough Council

The Deane House  
Belvedere Road  
Taunton  
Somerset TA1 1HE  
Telephone: 01823 356356  
[www.tauntondeane.gov.uk](http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk)

## Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership

*AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014*, 2009

*East Devon and Blackdown Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and East Devon District Landscape Character Assessment and Management Guidelines*, 2008

*Light pollution in the Blackdown Hills and Light Pollution Action for householders*, 2009

*Renewable Energy in the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*, 2010

## English Heritage

[www.english-heritage.org.uk/your-property](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/your-property)

[www.helm.org.uk](http://www.helm.org.uk)

[English Heritage website providing case studies, guidance and publications]

## Other design guides

*Planning Design Guide for Mid Devon*, (undated)

*Extensions and alterations to houses – a design guide*, South Somerset District Council, 2010

*Landscape Design – a Guide to Good Practice*, South Somerset District Council, 2006

*Design Guide for Taunton Deane*, 1998

## Reference books and useful websites

*Buildings of England: Devon*, Nikolaus Pevsner, revised edition 1989

*Buildings of England: South and West Somerset*, Nikolaus Pevsner, new edition 2002

*Devon building, an introduction to local traditions*, P Beacham (ed), 1990

*The traditional houses of Somerset*. Jane Penoyre, 2005

*Traditional buildings in the parish of Combe St Nicholas*, Somerset Vernacular Building Research Group, 2009

[www.devonbuildingsgroup.org.uk](http://www.devonbuildingsgroup.org.uk)

[a group whose aim is to encourage awareness of all aspects of the wealth of historic buildings in Devon]

[www.devonearthbuilding.com](http://www.devonearthbuilding.com)

[an association whose aim is to sustain the ancient and traditional practice of building in earth or 'cob' in the South-West of England]

[www.svbrg.org.uk](http://www.svbrg.org.uk)

[website of the Somerset Vernacular Building Research Group]

## Domestic energy

[www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)

[www.climatechangeandyourhome.org.uk](http://www.climatechangeandyourhome.org.uk)

[English Heritage website for those with older houses]





## **Blackdown Hills AONB**

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**Blackdown  
Hills AONB**