

Cornwall Design Guide | PART TWO

This pdf is best viewed at full screen mode.

Live links appear in [blue](#) or are indicated by arrows ([»](#)), or both.

Use the supplementary navigation tools as well as Adobe functionality (mobile and tablet devices use own proprietary navigation).

Previous page

Contents of overall Cornwall Design Guide

Contents of individual sections

Next page

[«](#) [main contents](#) [section contents](#) [»](#)

Section 1
Importance of good design in a Cornish context [»](#)

Section 2
Design principles [»](#)

Section 3
Getting the design process right [»](#)

Importance of good design in Cornish context



© Richard Carman

Taking into account the historic context of place and community.

1. Importance of good design in Cornish context

Cornwall has a diverse geography shaped from being a peninsula and the proximity of the sea. Activities such as mining, agriculture, fishing and tourism have influenced Cornwall's moorland and countryside as well as its coast, villages and towns. These influences provide Cornwall with a strong cultural identity and a unique heritage.

[The Cornwall Maritime Strategy 2012-2030 »](#)

[Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record »](#)

and [Cornwall's Landscape »](#)

are sources of information you may find useful about the character of Cornwall and how to understand it. The design of all new developments within Cornwall should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the site and its wider context.

Understanding the variation in settlement character in Cornwall

Cornwall Council has produced a

[Local Landscape Assessment »](#)

which shows Cornwall is characterised by many settlements and landscape patterns.

Cornish communities have evolved in different ways and each has developed a strong local identity with their own traditions, many of which continue today.

Cornwall's settlement can be dated back to the Iron Age. It still remains fundamentally linked to its historic character and culture, with a 'dispersed settlement pattern', that is neither urban nor rural. Development proposals should take account of a locality's unique historic context and qualities.

We have produced the

[Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record »](#)

which provides a comprehensive resource of the county's urban and historic fabric.

Substantial parts of Cornwall are Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or have

[World Heritage Site »](#)

status awarded by UNESCO.

Design aspiration of Cornwall

Cornwall aspires to have a built environment of a quality that matches its outstanding natural and historic environment. Cornwall Design Guide aims to promote the highest quality design and development based on the robust design process and principles of good design explained in the following sections.

Creating suitable designs for places of historic significance.



2

Design principles



The new Boscastle Play School embodies many outstanding features of design principles and detailing.

Section

2

Design principles

We recommend any new development proposals follow all the relevant principles listed in this section.

Design principles

- 2.1 » Connections
- 2.2 » Facilities and services
- 2.3 » Where new facilities are proposed
- 2.4 » Public transport
- 2.5 » Meeting local requirements

Creating a place

- 2.6 » Working with the site and its context
- 2.7 » Creating well defined streets & spaces
- 2.8 » Easy to find your way around

Design & details

- 2.9 » Character
- 2.10 » Architectural integrity

Streets & home

- 2.11 » Streets for all
- 2.12 » Car parking
- 2.13 » Public & private spaces

2. Design principles

2.1 Connections

Does the scheme integrate into its surroundings by reinforcing existing connections and creating new ones; whilst also respecting existing buildings, historic context and land uses along the boundaries of the development site?

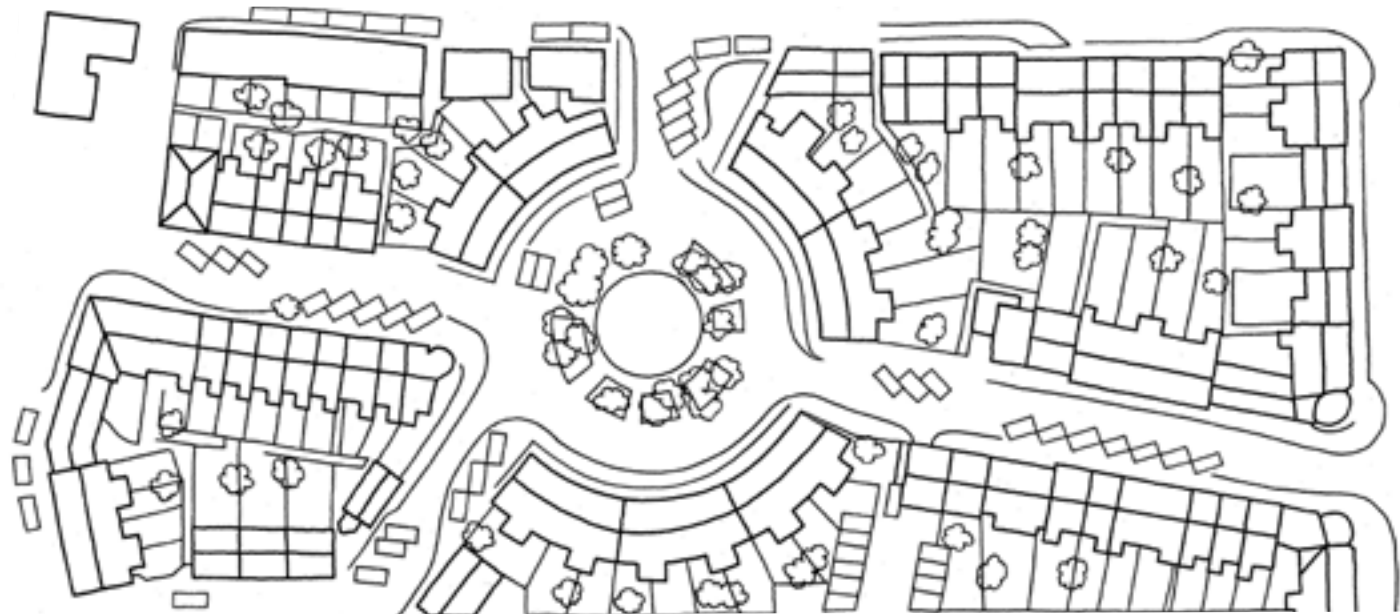
Where should vehicles come in and out of the development?

Should there be pedestrian and cycle only routes in to and through the development? If so where should they go?

Where should new streets be placed? Could they be used to cross the development site and help create linkages across the scheme and in to the existing neighbourhood?

How should the new development relate to existing development?

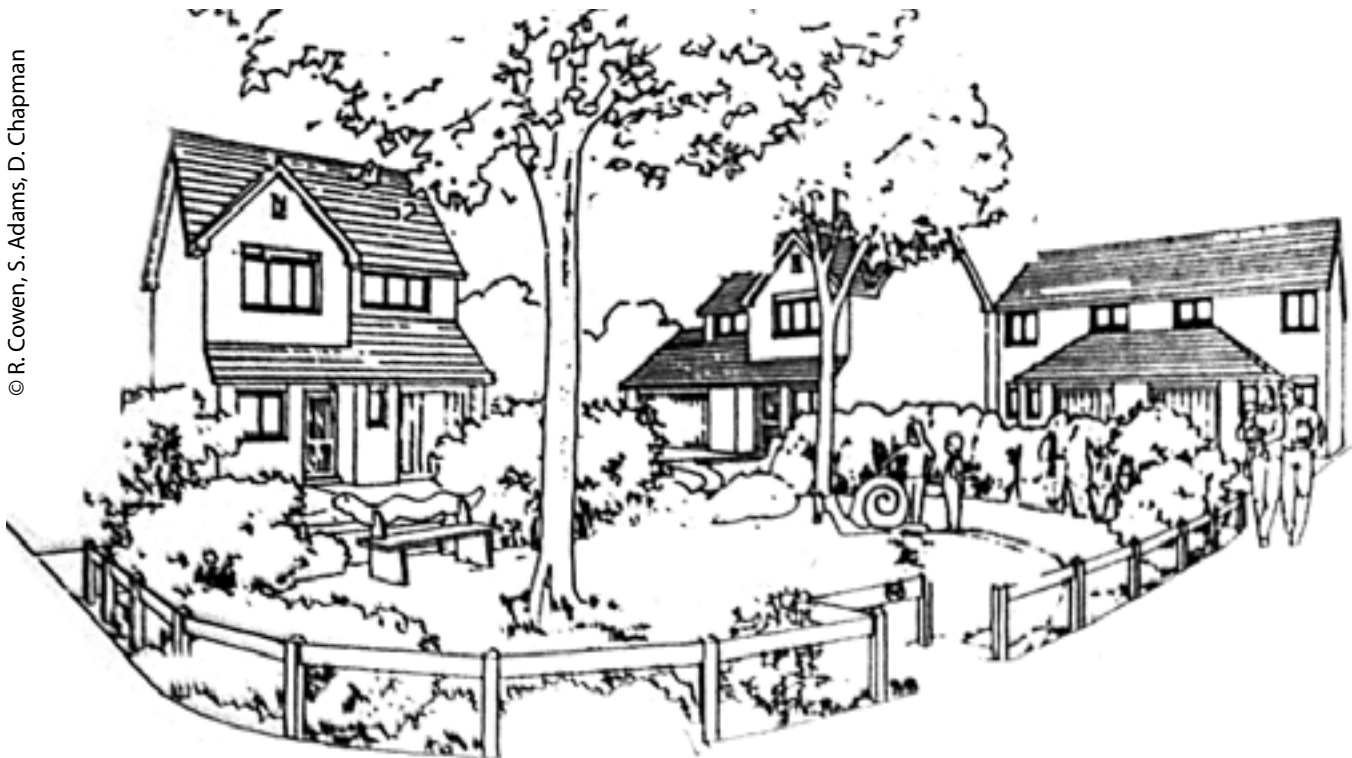
What should happen at the edges of the development site?



© R. Cowen, S. Adams, D. Chapman

A circular open space popular as a children's play area.

Illustration from Shaping Neighbourhoods: A guide for Health, Sustainability and Vitality. H Barton, M Grant and R Guise 2003



© R. Cowen, S. Adams, D. Chapman

We recommend:

- Thinking about where connections can and should be made; and about how best the new development can integrate into the existing neighbourhood rather than creating an inward looking cul-de-sac development;
- Remembering that people may want to walk through the development to get somewhere else, so carefully consider how a development can contribute towards this;
- Thinking carefully before blocking or redirecting existing routes, particularly where these are well used.
- Creating connections that are attractive, well lit, direct, easy to navigate, well overlooked and safe; and
- Ensuring that all streets and pedestrian/cycle only routes pass in front of people's homes, rather than to the rear of them.

We recommend that you avoid:

- Development layouts that do not improve the connectivity across the wider neighbourhood.

2. Design principles

2.2 Facilities & services

Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as shops, schools, workplaces, parks, play areas, pubs or cafes?

Are there enough facilities and services in the local area to support the development?
If not, what is needed?



Recreational community facilities at Helston.

2. Design principles

2.3 Where new facilities are proposed

Are these facilities what the area needs?

Are these new facilities located in the right place? If not, where should they go?



Access to or integration of facilities into developments can support or undermine their ultimate success.

We recommend:

- Planning development so that everyday facilities and services are located within a short walk of people's homes. The layout of a development and the quality of connections it provides can make a significant impact on walking distances and people's travel choices;
- Providing access to facilities through the provision of safe, convenient and direct paths or cycle routes. Consider whether there are any barriers to pedestrian/cycle access (for example, busy roads with no crossing points) and how these barriers can be removed or reduced;
- Locating new facilities (if provided) where the greatest number of existing and new residents can access them easily. This may be at the edge of a new development or on a through route; also consider whether existing facilities can be enhanced before proposing new ones;
- Where new local centres are provided, design these as vibrant places with smaller shops combined with residential accommodation above rather than for example, a single storey, single use supermarket building. Work to integrate these facilities into the fabric of the wider development to avoid creating an isolated retail park type environment dominated by car parking and highways infrastructure; and
- Creating new places within a development where people can meet each other such as public spaces, community buildings, cafes and restaurants. Aim to get these delivered as early as possible. Think carefully about how spaces could be used and design them with flexibility in mind. Consider where more active (and noisier) spaces should be located to avoid creating potential for conflict between users and adjacent residents.

We recommend that you avoid:

- Locating play areas directly in front of people's homes where they may become a source of tension;
- Carefully consider the distance between play equipment and homes in addition to the type of play equipment selected and the target age group; and
- Creating the potential for future conflict if residential uses and commercial premises are not combined thoughtfully.

2. Design principles

2.4 Public transport

Does the scheme have good access to public transport to help reduce car dependency?

What can the development do to encourage more people (both existing and new residents) to use public transport more often?

Where should new public transport stops be located?

Consider access to public transport for journeys to work, education and other public amenities.



We recommend:

- Maximising the number of homes on sites that are close to good, high frequency public transport routes, but ensure that this does not compromise the wider design qualities of the scheme and its relationship with its surroundings;
- Carefully considering the layout and orientation of routes to provide as many people as possible with the quickest, safest, attractive and most convenient possible routes between homes and public transport;
- Considering how the layout of the development can maximise the number of homes within a short walk from their nearest bus stop or train station where new public transport routes are planned to pass through the development;
- Locate public transport stops in well used places, ensuring that they are accessible for all, well overlooked, sheltered and lit;
- Considering how the development can contribute towards encouraging more

- sustainable travel choices by establishing a residents car club, providing electric car charging points, creating live/work units or homes that include space for a home office; and
- Exploring opportunities to reduce car miles through supporting new or existing park and ride schemes or supporting the concept of transit orientated developments (where higher density and/or mixed use development is centred on train stations).

We recommend that you avoid:

- Thinking about development sites in isolation from their surroundings. For example, bus only routes can be used to connect a new development to an existing development and create a more viable bus service without creating a 'rat run' for cars.

2. Design principles

2.5 Meeting local requirements

Does the development have a mix of uses that suit local requirements? For a housing scheme the housing types and tenures should meet local requirements.

What types of homes, tenure and price range are needed in the area (for example, starter homes, family homes or homes for those downsizing)?

Is there a need for different types of home ownership (such as part buy and part rent) or rented properties to help people on lower income?



A selection of buildings at the Anchor Warehouse development in Penryn, which meet a variety of local requirements.

We recommend:

- Demonstrating how the scheme's housing mix is justified with regard to planning policy, the local context and viability;
- Aiming for a housing mix that will create a broad-based community;
- Considering how to incorporate a range of property sizes and types, avoiding creating too many larger or too many smaller homes from being grouped together;

- Providing starter homes and homes for the elderly or downsizing households. People who are retired can help enliven a place during the working day. Providing for downsizing households can also help to rebalance the housing market and may help reduce the need for affordable housing contributions over time; and
- Designing homes and streets to be tenure-blind, so that it is not easy to differentiate between homes that are private and those that are shared ownership or rented.

We recommend that you avoid:

- Developments that create homes for only one market segment unless the development is very small.
- Using exterior features that enable people to easily identify market sale from rented/shared ownership homes, such as the treatment of garages.



2. Creating a place

2.6 Working with the site & its context



Does the scheme have regard to archaeology, topography, landscape features (including water courses), wildlife habitats, existing buildings, site orientation, historic character and microclimate?

Are there any views into or from the site that need to be carefully considered?

Are there any existing trees, hedgerows or other features, such as streams that need to be carefully designed into the development?

Should the development keep any existing building(s) on the site? If so, how could they be used?

We recommend:

- Being a considerate neighbour. Have regard to the height, layout, building line and form of existing development at the boundaries of the development site;
- Framing views of existing landmarks and create new ones by exploiting features such as existing mature trees to create memorable spaces;
- Orientating homes so that as many residents as possible can see these features from within their home;
- Carefully considering views into the development and how best these can be designed;
- Assessing the potential of any older buildings or structures for conversion. Retained buildings can become instant focal points within a development;
- Where possible, avoid transporting building waste and spoil off site by exploring opportunities for recycling building materials within the development;
- Working with contours of the land rather than against them, exploring how built form and detailed housing design can creatively respond to the topographical character; thinking carefully about the roofscape;

Making the best out of the existing topography.

- Exploring how a holistic approach can be taken to the design of sustainable urban drainage by exploiting the topography and geology;
- Exploring opportunities to protect, enhance and create wildlife habitats and provide for nesting birds and roosting bats within buildings;
- Being creative in landscape design by creating wildflower meadows rather than closely mown grassland and, where provided, creating rich habitats within balancing lagoons and swales; and
- Considering, through building orientation and design, the potential to benefit from solar gain. This must be achieved without compromising good urban design or creating issues associated with over heating.

We recommend that you avoid:

- Leaving an assessment of whether there are any views into and from the site that merit a design response until late in the design process.
- Transporting uncontaminated spoil away from the site that could be used for landscaping or adding level changes where appropriate.

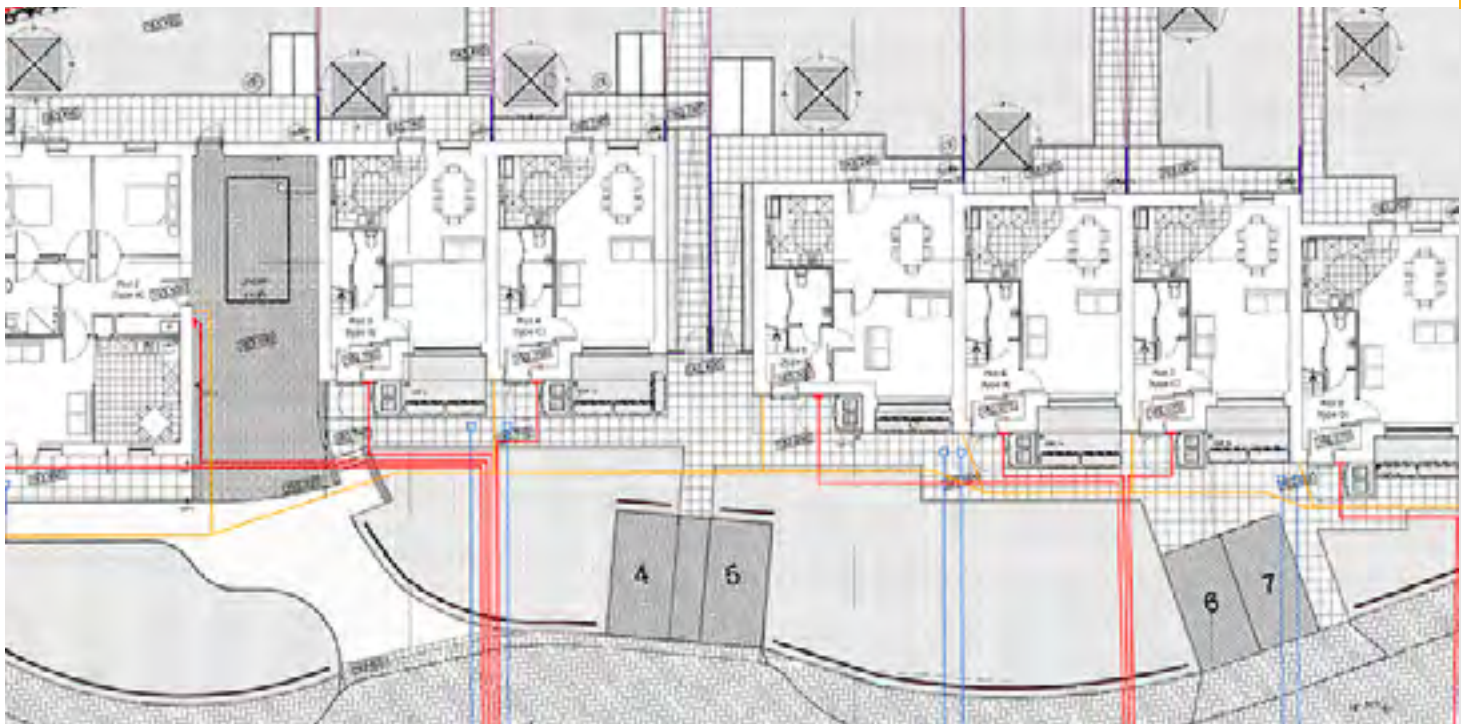
2. Creating a place

2.7 Creating well defined streets & spaces

Good streets and spaces are created by enclosing them with buildings and a strong landscaping scheme. Are buildings used to create enclosed streets and spaces?

Good buildings ‘turn’ corners. Do your buildings turn corners well?

Do all fronts of buildings, including front doors, face onto a street or space?



Street scapes that are defined by the position of buildings with integrated landscaped features.

Deciduous plants provide ideal solar shelter during the summer whilst letting winter sun through. This effect can be maximised by using climbers horizontally above glazing, cutting the summer heat gain whilst keeping as much winter light as possible, or by planting suitably sized trees to block the high angle of the summer sun.

© Mitchell Architects



We recommend:

- Creating streets that are principally defined by the position of buildings rather than the route of the carriage way;
- Designing buildings that turn corners well, so that both elevations seen from the street have windows to them; rather than offering blank walls to the street;
- Consider using windows that wrap around corners to maximise surveillance and bring generous amounts of natural light into homes; and
- Using a pattern of road types to create a hierarchy of streets and consider their enclosure, keeping to the well proportioned height to width ratios relative to the type of street.

We recommend that you avoid:

- Streets that lack spatial enclosure by exceeding recommended height to width ratios.
- Over reliance on ‘in front’ of plot parking that tends to create over wide streets dominated by parked cars and driveways unless there is sufficient space to use strong and extensive landscaping to compensate the lack of built form enclosure;
- Homes that back on to the street, or offer a blank elevation to the street; and
- Using garages and/or driveways or service areas to turn corners.

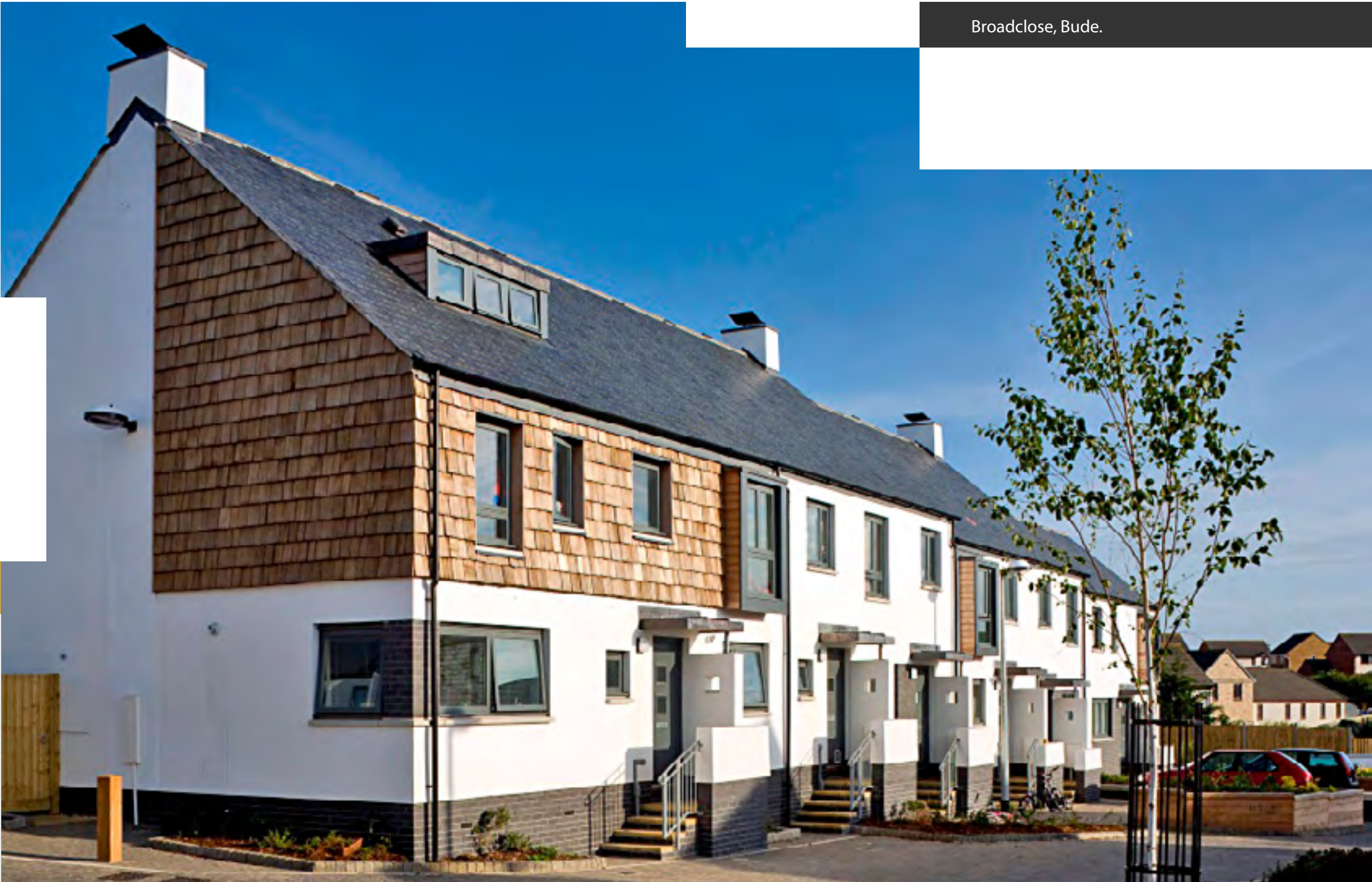
2. Creating a place

2.8 Easy to find your way around

Is the scheme designed to make it easy to find your way around?

Good streets and spaces are created by enclosing them with buildings and a strong landscaping scheme.

Are buildings used to create enclosed streets and spaces?



Broadclose, Bude.

We recommend:

- Creating streets that are principally defined by the position of buildings rather than the route of the carriageway;
- Using a pattern of road types to create a hierarchy of streets and considering their enclosure, keeping to the well proportioned height to width ratios relative to the type of street.

2. Design & details

2.9 Character

Does the scheme create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character?

How can the development be designed to have a local or distinctive identity?

Are there any distinctive characteristics within the area, such as building shapes, styles, colours and materials or the character of streets and spaces that the development should draw inspiration from?



© Richard Carman

We recommend:

- Identifying whether there are any architectural, landscape or other features that give a place a distinctive sense of character as a starting point for design. It may be possible to adapt elevations of standard house types to complement local character. Distinctiveness can also be delivered through new designs that respond to local characteristics in a contemporary way;
- Exploring what could be done to start to give a place a locally inspired identity if an area lacks a distinctive character or where there is no overarching character;
- Considering landscaping traditions that are fundamental to character, especially boundary treatments;
- Introducing building styles, details and landscaping features that can be easily expressed to someone visiting the development for the first time. Where an area has a strong and positive local identity, consider using this as a cue to reinforce the place's overall character;
- Varying the density, built form and appearance or style of development to help create areas with different character within larger developments. Using a range

of features will help to create townscape elements that can give a place a sense of identity and will help people find their way around. Subtle detailing can help reinforce the character of areas and in doing so, provide a level of richness and interest; and

- Working with the Council to investigate whether local or otherwise different materials can be used in place of standard highways surface materials and traffic furniture. Be creative and adventurous by exploring the potential to innovate, develop new ideas and build with new materials.

We recommend that you avoid:

- Using the lack of local character as a justification for further nondescript or characterless development;
- Ignoring local traditions or character without robust justification; and
- Too many identical or similar house types (where there is no benefit to the overall architectural integrity of the scheme from repetition).

Creating schemes that mirror the distinctive character of the surrounding area and chime with its historic context.

2. Design & details

2.10 Architectural integrity

Does the design of the scheme show high quality architecture, materials and detailing?



Integrating the trationional with the contemporary at Princess Pavillion, Falmouth.



The restored bandstand in all its Victorian glory.



2. Streets & home

2.11 Streets for all



Parking designated home zone where pedestrians and cyclists have priority over cars and parking is at the front of houses.

Are streets designed in a way that encourage low vehicle speeds and allows the streets to function as social spaces?

Are streets pedestrian and cycle friendly and are they designed to encourage cars to drive slower and more carefully?

Are streets designed in a way that they can be used as social spaces, such as places for children to play safely?

We recommend:

- Creating streets for people where vehicle speeds are designed not to exceed 20 mph. Working with the Council to create developments where buildings and detailed street design is used to tame, and not encourage, vehicle speeds. Sharp or blind corners force drivers to slow when driving around them while buildings that are closer together also make drivers proceed more cautiously;
- Thinking about how streets can be designed as social and play spaces, where the pedestrians and cyclists come first, rather than simply as routes for cars and vehicles to pass through;
- Using the best quality hard landscaping scheme that is viable without cluttering the streets and public spaces;
- Designing homes that offer good natural surveillance opportunities, carefully considering the impact of internal arrangement on the safety and vitality of the street;
- Consider maximising the amount of glazing to ground floor, street facing rooms to enhance surveillance opportunities creating a stronger relationship between the home and the street; and
- Creating homes that offer something to the street, thinking carefully about detail, craftsmanship and build quality. Pay particular attention to the space between the pavement

and front doors. A thoughtful and well designed entrance area and front door scheme will enhance the kerb appeal of homes whilst also contributing towards creating a visually interesting street. Carefully consider changes in level, the interface between different materials, quality finishing and the discreet placement of utility boxes.

We recommend that you avoid:

- 20mph speed limits enforced with excessive signage or expensive compliance systems or features;
- Designing a scheme that allows drivers to cross pedestrian footpaths at speed to access their driveways;
- Consider how hard and soft landscaping can be used to make drivers approach their street and home more cautiously and responsibly; and
- Minimise steps and level changes to make them as easy as possible for pushchairs and wheelchairs. A pavement that has lots of variation in levels and dropped kerbs to enable cars to cross it can encourage unofficial parking up on the kerb and may make movement less easy for those pushing a pushchair, in a wheelchair or walking with a stick or walking frame.

2. Streets & home

2.12 Car parking

Is resident and visitor parking sufficient and well integrated so that it does not dominate the street?

Is there enough parking for residents and visitors?

Is parking positioned close to people’s homes?

Are any parking courtyards small in size (generally no more than five properties should use a parking courtyard) and are they well overlooked by neighbouring properties?

Are garages well positioned so that they do not dominate the street scene?

© CTD / imijstudio



We recommend:

- Anticipating car parking demand taking into account the location, availability and frequency of public transport together with local car ownership trends. Provide parking space for visitors;
- Designing streets to accommodate on street parking but allow for plenty of trees and planting to balance the visual impact of parked cars and reinforce the spatial enclosure of the street. On street parking has the potential to be both space efficient and can also help to create a vibrant street, where neighbours have more opportunity to see and meet other people;

- Removing opportunities for anti-social parking. Very regular and formal parking treatments have the potential to reduce anti-social parking. People are less prone to parking in places where they should not be parking and where street design clearly defines other uses, such as pavements or landscape features;
- Making sure people can see their car from their home or can park it somewhere they know it will be safe. Where possible avoid rear parking courts; and
- Using a range of parking solutions appropriate to the context and the types of housing

proposed. Where parking is positioned to the front of the property, ensure that at least an equal amount of the frontage is allocated to an enclosed, landscaped front garden as it is for parking to reduce vehicle domination. Where rows of narrow terraces are proposed, consider positioning parking within the street scene, for example a central reservation of herringbone parking. For higher density schemes, underground parking with a landscaped deck above can work well.

We recommend that you avoid:

- Relying on a single parking treatment. A combination of car parking treatments nearly always creates more capacity, visual interest and a more successful place;
- Large rear parking courts. When parking courts are less private, they offer greater opportunity for thieves, vandals and those who should not be parking there;
- Parking that is not well overlooked;
- Using white lining to mark out and number spaces. These are not only costly, but unsightly. It can be cheaper and more aesthetically pleasing to use small metal plates to number spaces, and a few well placed block markers to define spaces; and
- Not providing a clear and direct route between front doors and the street by not balancing the amount of parking in front of plots with soft relief.

2. Streets & home

2.13 Public & private spaces



Will public and private spaces be clearly defined and designed to be attractive, well managed and safe?

What types of open space should be provided within this development?

Is there a need for play facilities for children and teenagers? If so, is this the right place or should the developer contribute towards an existing facility in the area that could be enhanced and maintained?

We recommend:

- Clearly defining private and public spaces with clear vertical markers, such as railings, walls or robust planting. Where there is a modest building set back, a simple change in surface materials may suffice;
- Select species that will form a strong and effective boundary, such as hedge forming shrubs rather than low growing specimens or exotic or ornamental plants. Ensure sufficient budget provision is allocated to ensure a high quality boundary scheme is delivered;
- Creating spaces that are well overlooked by neighbouring properties. Check that there is plenty of opportunity for residents to see streets and spaces from within their homes. Provide opportunities for direct and oblique views up and down the street, considering the use of bay, oriel and corner windows where appropriate. Designing balconies can further increase opportunities for natural surveillance;
- Thinking about what types of spaces are created and where they should be located. Consider how spaces can be designed to be multi-functional, serving as wide an age group as possible and how they could contribute towards enhancing biodiversity. Where open spaces are provided, think about where people might want to walk and what routes they might want to take and plan paths accordingly providing

lighting if required. Consider the sun path and shadowing throughout the day and which areas will be in light rather than shade. Areas more likely to benefit from sunshine are often the most popular places for people to gather. Exploring whether local communities would wish to see new facilities created or existing ones upgraded. Think how play can be approached in a holistic manner, for example by distributing play equipment or playable spaces and features across an entire open space; and

- Providing a management and maintenance plan to include a sustainable way to fund public or shared communal open spaces.

We recommend that you avoid:

- Informal or left over grassed areas that offer no public or private use or value and do little or nothing to support biodiversity;
- Avoid creating small fenced play areas set within a larger of open space where the main expense is the cost of fencing; and
- Landscaping that is cheap, of poor quality, poorly located and inappropriate for its location. Low growing shrubs rarely survive in places where people are likely to walk over them, such as besides parking bays.

3

Getting the design process right



Carclaze Primary School. with its sedum covered roof.

Section

3

Getting the design process right

We recommend that the following principles are adhered to for any new development proposals.

- 3.1 » The design process
- 3.2 » Site and context appraisal
- 3.3 » Consultation & involvement
- 3.4 » Review of planning policy
- 3.5 » Potential & constraints assessment
- 3.6 » Initial plans & proposals
- 3.7 » Refinement of design
- 3.8 » Finalise proposal
- 3.9 » Design & access statement

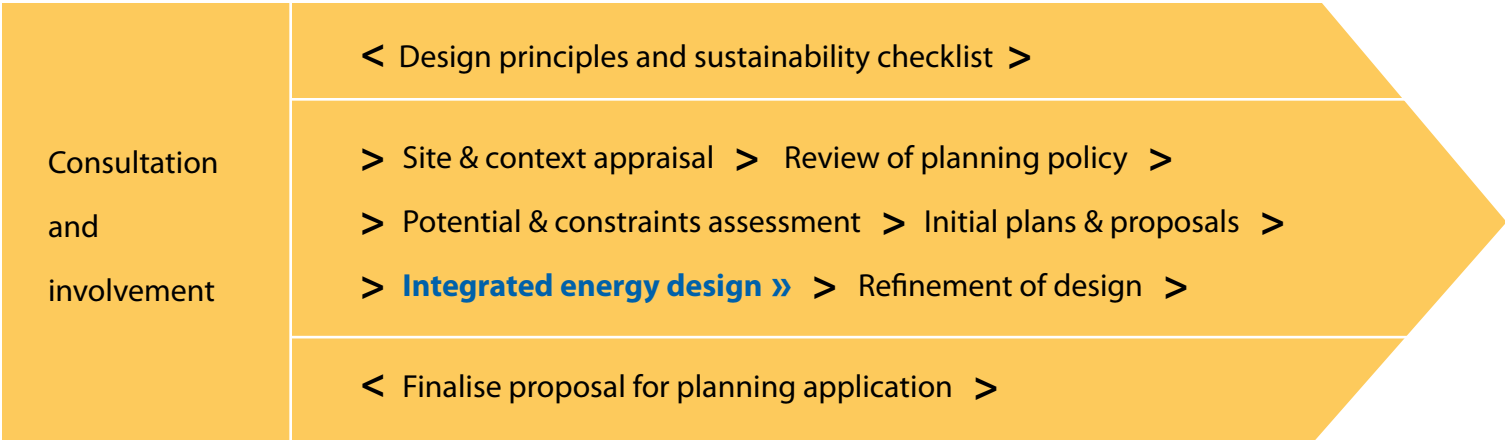
3. Getting the design process right

3.1 Design process

The most important part of any planning application is a good design process, which provides a detailed understanding of local character and circumstances as demonstrated through a design and access statement. This will explain your design process, and will show that your decisions are based on good research and groundwork.

An effective design process will follow a path so that one process flows into another. It is important that your consultation results can be fed into the design and that your plans are adapted to meet the requirements of the users and community.

Cornwall Council suggests the following design process:



As early in the design as possible, use a red line on General Arrangement plans and sections to show the line of the building’s insulation – the thermal envelope. Drawing the line will help highlight potential thermal bridges that need detailed attention, and leaving the red line on the drawing when it gets to site will help highlight the thermal envelope to the contractors.

3.2 Site & context appraisal

Depending upon the size and nature of the proposals, an overall master plan and accompanying plans should be prepared which show:

- Existing site features and how they will be retained and enhanced;
- The relationship of buildings, gardens, landscape, open spaces and circulation links between the existing place and proposed development;
- Opportunities to enhance biodiversity and green infrastructure links;
- The treatment of boundaries and edges to the development; and
- The treatment of buildings, roads, car parking and external spaces, including materials and planting proposals.

As early as possible in the design, use a blue line on sections and plans to show where the building is intended to be made airtight. Drawing the line will highlight the challenging details, and retaining the blue line on the drawings will keep the contractors on site informed of the ‘defensible line’ that they should be careful to maintain.

3.3 Consultation & involvement

Early consultations

Government guidance encourages applicants to undertake consultations and community involvement at the earliest possible stage. This will help to avoid the potential pitfalls of an unsupported proposal when it is too late to change the scheme.

Advice from statutory consultees

Consult the Council and other relevant statutory authorities early to obtain their policies, standards and requirements and initial advice. For larger schemes and complex proposals this should lead to an ongoing dialogue which can be formally planned through a planning performance agreement.

Local initiatives

Check whether there are any local initiatives relevant to the development such as our design review panel, conservation area advisory groups, heritage groups, community groups or local interest groups who may be a source of assistance and information.

3. Getting the design process right

- 3.4 Review of planning policy
- 3.5 Potential & constraints assessment
- 3.6 Initial plans & proposals
- 3.7 Refinement of design

Your development should meet the relevant requirements of policy and guidance contained within the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) ».

You should also review and consider the [Cornwall Local Plan](#) »

and relevant guidance available on the Council's [Planning Service's homepage](#) ».

Capture the key considerations influencing the design and development of the scheme on a map and short list.

Develop initial concept and crude design options for analysis and refinement.

Make appropriate amendments to the scheme so the best possible plans evolve. Include reference to site and context, local stakeholder requirements and accessibility.

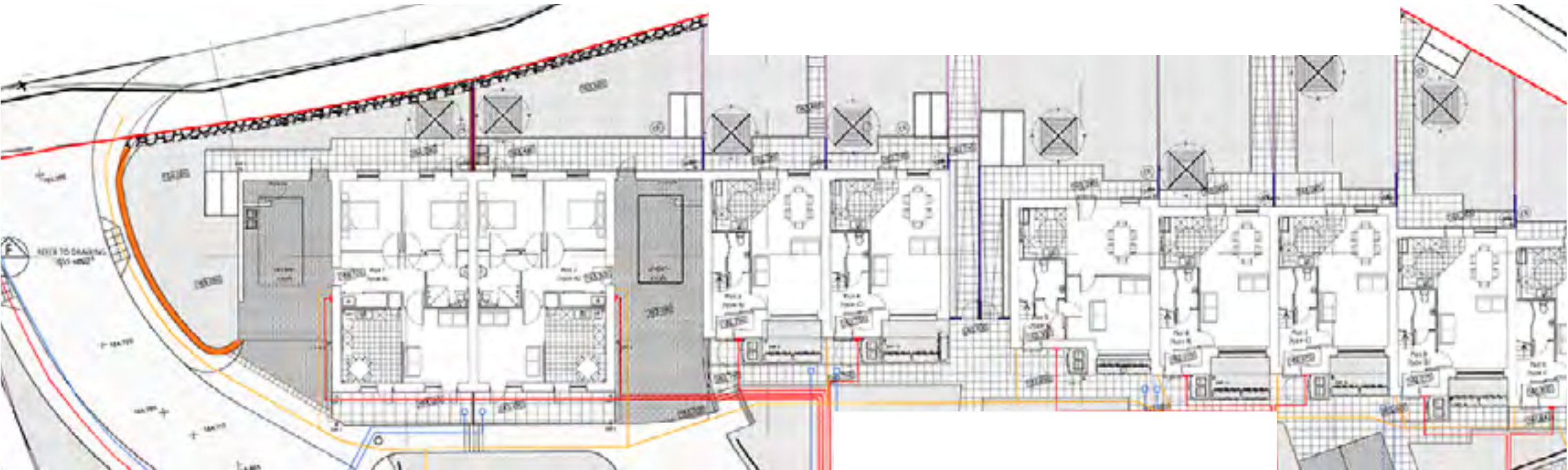


Evaluating access, usage patterns & safety for public spaces.

© Richard Carman

3. Getting the design process right

3.8 Finalise proposal



3.9 Design & access statement

The most important part of a project is a good design process, this will provide a detailed understanding of local character and circumstances and this understanding is demonstrated through the design and access statement. Keep a log of your design decisions from the start and this will explain your design process, and provide evidence that your decisions are based on good research, understanding and groundwork.

The Government's [Planning Portal](#) »

and

[CABE](#) »

provide guidance on the production of a design and access statement.