

Mylor Parish
Neighbourhood Development Plan
Appendix D
Mylor Parish Design Guide
Achieving good design



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1 INTRODUCTION

Mylor Parish is fortunate as it lies entirely within the Cornwall South Coast Central AONB, borders part of the Cornwall Mining World Heritage Site, contains the Carclew designated park and borders that of the Enys estate, and has three conservation areas with a range of Listed and vernacular buildings of traditional Cornish designs.¹ Achieving good design in new structures is therefore of paramount importance.

Good design will be achieved from a mix of four factors: the right structures in the right locations, for the right purposes, decided by the right processes. The purpose of this document is to set the context for design decisions within the Parish and to specify the steps required to reach agreement.

The over-riding objective is to retain the distinctive rural character of the Parish while ensuring that any developments, whether individual structures or groups of several houses:

- Fit in to their immediate surroundings
- Contribute to the community, maintaining the settlements as open environments where priority is given to pedestrians and cyclists
- Are sympathetic to the needs of wildlife
- Minimise the impact on the AONB

1.1 Key design issues

Much is made elsewhere of the uniquely attractive visual characteristics of Mylor Parish² with the Cornwall South Central AONB and some of the proposals are driven by this consideration. As well as being sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local vernacular, Mylor Parish accepts the need for sustainable and contemporary development approaches within its built fabric but this must be achieved in a way that respects the character of the area, is subservient to the landscape and significantly enhances the overall character of the Parish.³

Further suburbanisation of the Parish, and in particular the expansion of the outskirts of the core villages of Flushing and Mylor Bridge, will be resisted except for affordable homes to meet local & evidenced need, and in a direction of growth supported by the community. The 'cluttering' of the public realm with unnecessary signs will also be discouraged.

¹ See Historic Built Environment report: Evidence Base Chapter 6

² See Appendix B Landscape Visual Impact Assessment

³ National Planning Policy Framework para 55

1.2 The Design Context

Building design within the Parish is guided by a hierarchy of external documents chief amongst which are:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and various Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) notes
- The Cornwall Local Plan
- The AONB Management Plan 2016-2021⁴ whose aim is ‘to ensure that the characteristics that make the AONB special are maintained for future generations’
- The Cornwall Design Guide 2020⁵ which was in draft at the time this document was being prepared, superseding the previous document

Depending on their location, some design decisions will need to take account of the World Heritage Site Management Plan and Policies relating to maintenance of the historic environment.

The NPPF emphasises the need to ‘avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of five criteria are met. The last of these is that ‘the design is of exceptional quality, in that it either ‘is of truly outstanding or innovative ...’ or ‘would significantly enhance its immediate area’ Such proposals, requiring a mixture of technical evaluation, at the same time as personal & subjective matters of taste and style, are likely to require wide ranging consultation before approval.

1.3 The Cornwall Local Plan and Cornwall Design Guide

The Cornwall Local Plan, with its new Supplementary Planning Document⁶, is the main general driver behind decisions on the sites which may be developed, moderated by the Policies set out in the rest of this Neighbourhood Development Plan, in particular the Housing Development Preferences document.⁷

The existing Cornwall Design Guide made a series of recommendations which would lead to good design across Cornwall. In each case, this Plan would expect developers to regard these as requirements rather than recommendations. The new draft Guide provides stronger guidance which we welcome.

However, the Design Guide was written to apply to both urban and rural settings across Cornwall. Some of its recommendations are inappropriate to a rural parish like Mylor.

1.4 The Cornwall South Coast Central AONB Management Plan

The AONB Management Plan is more specific than the Cornwall Design Guide, which covers both urban and rural environments, and warns against ‘development that would conflict

⁴ <https://www.cornwall-aonb.gov.uk/management-plan>

⁵ <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/designguide>

⁶ <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-policy/adopted-plans/planning-policy-guidance/housing-supplementary-planning-document/>

⁷ Appendix A

with or prejudice the implementation of the AONB Management Plan’ and warns against the ‘development of land which would, by reason of its scale or nature or the location of the land,’ ... be ‘of major importance/significance in the context of its impact on the protected landscape’.

It then warns developers that: ‘Major development will be refused in the Cornwall AONB unless it can be demonstrated that there are exceptional circumstances for the development; that the development is in the public interest and that the purposes of the AONB designation are afforded the highest status of protection with regard to landscape character and scenic beauty.’⁸

It goes on to say that high quality sustainable development must:

- Be appropriately located, of an appropriate scale and addresses landscape sensitivity and capacity
- Be compatible with the distinctive character of the location described by the Landscape Character Assessment, with particular regard to the setting of settlements and the rural landscape
- Not compromise the special qualities and characteristics of the AONB designation as outlined in the Statement of Significance for each local section and relevant character assessments
- Maintain semi-natural corridors
- Promote the conservation of the historic environment as a whole and in particular those designated heritage assets and their setting; including the Conservation Areas and World Heritage Site
- Be designed to respect quality of place in the use of distinctive local building styles and materials, dark skies and tranquillity; and
- Protect trees, other important landscape features and semi natural habitats in order that it can contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the protected landscape.’

All these conditions are relevant to Mylor Parish.

1.5 Conservation Areas and the World Heritage Site

There are three Conservation Areas within the Parish which have been locally designated by Cornwall Council to Historic England criteria and which have statutory protections This notably includes limiting or removing, the availability of permitted development.⁹

Decisions relating to Conservation Areas are concerned with ‘individual buildings, groups of them with regard to common elements, variety of styles, consistency of appearance, street & building lines, plot sizes and shapes, overall and local density of building, relationship of

⁸ Policy MD1

⁹ Through the application of an ‘Article 4 Direction’

built areas with gardens, open spaces & public areas and indeed views from within the conservation area to areas beyond’.

Issues relating to the World Heritage Site are mediated by the WHS Management Plan.

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR MYLOR PARISH

1.6 General principles

The Design Policies of the Mylor NDP are consistent with the Cornwall Guide, but go into greater detail and are more directly relevant to the needs of the Parish. These are in full conformity with the principles of the higher documents mentioned at paragraph 1.2.

Retaining and enhancing the vernacular style of design, within both the public realm and wider architecture of Mylor Parish, is a priority to ensure that the Parish maintains its character.

All developments, including new build, replacements, alterations or extensions must:

- Be in accordance with this design guidance
- Contribute positively to economic, social and sustainability requirements of the Parish
- Contribute to the quality of the AONB



A row of typical vernacular cottages within the Mylor Bridge Conservation Area

1.7 Location

Other parts of this Plan set out the direction of growth, generally preferred by the community, of the existing villages.¹⁰ Given these constraints, we would expect that:

- All development will retain or enhance, views both within settlements and out towards the countryside, and proposals will demonstrate how this is achieved
- All development affecting the transitional edges between a settlement and countryside will be softened by landscaping to complement the character of the adjacent or surrounding countryside
- All development which affect any heritage asset will respect the significance of the asset and shall demonstrate how local distinctiveness is reinforced
- Housing density will ensure a balance between the built and natural environments
- All developments of 5 or more houses will be within easy walking distance of shops, facilities and public transport

The NPPF emphasises the need to ‘avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside’¹¹ unless one or more of five criteria are met. The last of these is that ‘the design is of exceptional quality, in that it either ‘is of truly outstanding or innovative ...’ or ‘would significantly enhance its immediate area’. Any such development within the Parish is highly unlikely to achieve this and we would regard any such proposal as a ‘major development’ requiring a wide-ranging community consultation.

1.8 Scale

The majority of existing buildings in the Parish are generally of one or two storeys, reflecting the rural nature of the Parish. Building densities generally provide plenty of outdoor space.

- Mylor is not the right environment for signature buildings in landmark locations. Any proposals for such buildings would be regarded as a ‘major development’ requiring conformity to the principles set out in the Cornwall Design Guide and the policies of the Cornwall AONB Management Plan. They would also be regarded as a ‘major development’ requiring a wide-ranging community consultation
- Any large or conspicuous developments should provide an evidenced application that the building enhances the landscape’s existing characteristics, and should be strongly supported by the Parish Council if it is to be approved. The issues about size, footprint and especially height, are of great importance to conspicuous or isolated sites
- It will be rare that a three-storey building will be acceptable unless it is not dominant from any aspect, especially from a creek, and the particular land conformation permits it, for example by requiring entrances at different levels.
- Extensions or additions are allowed to houses without a planning application or permission as ‘Permitted Development’ provided certain limits and conditions are adhered to. Extensions should be reasonable and should not dramatically reduce

¹⁰ Appendix A: Housing Development Preferences

¹¹ NPPF, para 79

the open space: housing ratio eg beyond 70% building within the curtilage. Re-development of existing sites should not exceed a similar ratio

- Replacement dwellings or extensions within the AONB, being in 'Article 2(3) designated land', are excluded from the recent changes to the Permitted Development regulations, and the full list, as they apply to the AONB will apply throughout the Parish. This limits the size, location, height & choice of materials of the extension. Side extensions are not permitted, and no more than half the 'area of land around the original house' may be covered by additions or other buildings'.
- Planning applications for improved or replacement dwellings should at minimum comply with the Permitted Development criteria, whether or not permitted development applies to that site. Where the criteria refer to side elevations fronting a highway, this should also apply to those fronting any waterside.



A recent development of open-market cottages in Mylor Bridge of a suitable scale and adopting a modern Cornish style



A terrace of former Captains' houses in Flushing: a site where a three-storey building would be acceptable

1.9 Appearance

The design of buildings can clearly add to, or detract from visual impact, the Parish's great asset. Some aspects of style or building materials can be objectively agreed, but there are others which are at least partly subjective, or a matter of judgement and taste. Whatever the result, any new structure must fit into the landscape, and should not conflict with or aim to be a feature of it, and thus reflect and enhance the landscape, not contrast with it.

Because the appearance of the built and natural environment have evolved over centuries, but can change in months, decisions which are contentious should as a rule be conservative.

All developments should:

- Reflect and echo the architectural style of neighbouring properties where standards are high and in compliance with the Cornwall Design Guide; including, for example, Cornish styles and finishes such as slate hung, light coloured render, natural stone or traditional-style wooden cladding
- Signature buildings are not appropriate on existing estates if they stand out from the surroundings. Despite the importance of energy efficiency, the addition of the 'eco' label does not justify a design that would otherwise be unacceptable. All buildings should be energy efficient (see paragraph 2.6)
- Strong building lines should be respected and soft landscaped front gardens and landscaped front boundaries should be retained or enhanced
- Solar panels do not currently require planning permission, but unless carefully designed can have a major impact on the appearance of an area. It is strongly

suggested, therefore, that where possible, PV tiles are used rather than panels, and that panels are designed into the roof-scape to be either inconspicuous or to look a deliberate design feature. Retro-fit panels with eye catching bright borders are particularly discouraged.

- Should a developer wish to build houses which espouse or extend modern styles, the application to do so must draw attention to these departures and provide evidence of how the proposal will enhance the appearance of the settlement in question. The application should embody at the very minimum the spirit of conservation of character apparent within the MNDP and most of the specific guidelines or policies. The advice of the MPC, as the representatives of the village population, should be given pre-eminent weight.



The award-winning Lemon Hill Gardens development which responded to the neighbouring properties by incorporating a range of Cornish architectural references



The Tregew Meadows development of affordable housing demonstrating the way in which variety of finishes can help to provide character and avoid dull uniformity

1.10 Maintaining the sense of community

A village thrives on its sense of community and is essentially a pedestrian environment where footpaths, bicycles, prams and pushchairs can get around easily.

- Higher policies recommend against 'gated developments'. This Guide endorses this approach and goes further in recommending against attempts to create pseudo-enclaves or cul-de-sacs. All developments of five or more houses should be 'pedestrian porous' leaving access points which can lead through to future developments and help link different parts of the village
- Where a mix of affordable and open market homes are built together, the affordable homes should be as far as viable indistinguishable from open market properties. New housing should be 'tenure blind' with no external visual distinction between the types of house, their quality, or their external environments, and with full access by all tenures to any shared facilities. This will help to achieve the mixed and balanced communities outlined in both the NPPF12 and Cornwall Local Plan.¹³
- Developments of more than 5 houses must provide external open green space which is accessible to all
- Have a reasonable and well-designed space outside for household recycling containers, bicycles etc

¹² NPPF para 62 (b)

¹³ Cornwall Local Plan 1.18 and Policy 12: Design

- Consider the need for design features to discourage crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour and ensure ongoing community safety, and cohesion
- Have no unreasonable covenants e.g. preventing residents from hanging out washing

1.11 Environmental considerations

Environmental considerations are crucially important. All development should:

- Be built to maximise environmental sustainability: contain a high standard of additional energy-saving features and, in the case of new build, energy capture or generation. As all BREEAM standards have been largely incorporated into current Building Regulations, it is expected that new buildings will meet the full range of sustainable materials and construction methods specified
- Contain a high standard of additional energy-saving features and for new builds, renewable energy generation and water capture where possible
- Development shall seek to retain existing mature hedging and established trees and to enhance landscaping in providing for biodiversity. Any existing mature trees or hedging that are unavoidably removed should be replaced elsewhere on the site to provide a significant overall biodiversity net gain
- Provide designated public green space – open to all

1.12 Vehicles & access

Priority should be given for pedestrian and bicycle access around the village, with pavements and paths to ensure safety. All developments should:

- Provide parking space on site for at least 2 vehicles per dwelling
- Integrate parking so as not to dominate the public realm and adhere to any adopted parking standard or guidelines

1.13 Street and external lighting

Street lighting can be a contentious issue with the community. Mylor parish is a rural parish with artificial lighting in the main restricted to the settlements of Flushing, Mylor Bridge and Mylor Churchtown.

A 1995 Government White Paper of 1995 stated that the ‘... intrusiveness of lighting in the countryside should be kept to a minimum.’¹⁴ PPG7 (The Countryside- Environmental Quality & Economic Development) also says that ‘Planning policies & development should take account of the special features or qualities of designated areas such as AONB.’

Street lighting has both strengths and weaknesses. It clearly has an impact on safety, allowing people to move around safely at night and, used judiciously, deters or prevents crime. However it has disadvantages. It can be intrusive, it can affect sleep patterns, there is evidence that it affects wildlife behaviours and, in some circumstances, it can aid crime.

¹⁴ Rural England- A Nation Committed to a Living Countryside

There is also the energy usage to consider, and modern policy inclines towards the promotion of dark skies, particularly in rural areas.

It is recommended that developments do need to include street lighting by necessity but, that where such lighting is deemed to be necessary, the scheme should demonstrate that:

- The lighting is the minimal required for the lighting task
- Light spillage is minimised by the use of directional lighting, shielded by hoods, cowls or equivalent
- Planting/building position is used to prevent light spillage onto the adjacent countryside
- Short light columns are used to reduce ecological impact
- Narrow spectrum bulbs are used with amber LED lighting
- Security lights are <2000 lumens. Pedestrian lighting should be below 3 Lux at ground level
- A balanced scheme is used to avoid a pattern of very light and very dark areas
- A varying schedule is used to provide lighting at peak times eg the lights might be timed to come on one hour after dusk, turned off at midnight, relit at 6am and turned off one hour before sunrise
- Energy efficient systems are used

Where security lights are installed, these should follow the above policies and they should:

- Be set at a sharp downward angle
- Focus on a narrow area
- Use movement sensors rather than continuous light

Special care should be taken at the edge of settlements to ease the transition from light space occupied primarily by humans, to spaces occupied primarily by wildlife.

2 THE PLANNING PROCESS

2.1 Introduction

Policy at all levels emphasises the importance of achieving a collaborative approach to planning. In the introduction to the Cornwall Design Guide the Portfolio Holder says:

‘We are looking for developers and their teams to thoroughly consider and reflect the context of a site from the earliest stages and to engage effectively with stakeholders and Cornwall Council throughout the design, planning and delivery stages to achieve the best solutions.’

Cornwall Council goes further, outlining a Pre-Application Community Engagement Process (PACE) which it describes as ‘options for developers as part of the pre-application process’.¹⁵

This Design Guide underscores this collaborative approach.

2.2 Achieving a successful consultation

If a development of any scale is to be supported then both the Cornwall Design Guide and the Mylor Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan must play a key role in determining the content of any initial Design and Access Statement by developers. It is therefore essential that all parties are involved in discussions at the earliest stage.

The Cornwall Design Guide is at pains to emphasise the importance of consulting at an early stage. In paragraph 4.51 it advises developers to:

- ‘Consider following Cornwall Council’s Pre-Application Community Engagement. This brings together the community, the Local Member, interested parties and developers in order to engage the community at the earliest possible stage.
- Consider establishing a community liaison panel, a newsletter and an online and/or social media presence to maximise your reach.

Community consultation on options should take place in advance of a formal Pre-Application. This will help to identify the community’s views and help to avoid ‘road-blocks’ or other difficulties later.

2.3 The Pre-Application stage

It is essential to get the Pre-Application stage right if things are to be managed in an open and transparent way. Pre-Application should be a request for advice, not a request for a decision. There have been occasions when policy commitments have been made at Pre-Application stage which have constrained later decision-making, ruled out other options or made later objections irrelevant. This is unacceptable as it subverts the democratic process.

The Cornwall Design Guide repeats its advice about the need for consultation in paragraph 4.55 saying that developers should:¹⁶

- ‘Request pre-application advice from Cornwall Council as soon as possible. Pre-application advice can be sought at different stages and multiple times throughout the design process.
- Engage Cornwall’s Design Review Panel (CDRP). CDRP operates independently from the development management function of the planning authority to peer assess proposals. Its purpose is to encourage design excellence and draws on a pool of external design expertise. It should be seen as a forum within which developers and their teams are able to test and refine ideas and is therefore best consulted within the pre-application period and will often be included in Planning Performance

¹⁵ <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-agents-area/pre-application-community-engagement/>

¹⁶ Paragraph 4.55

Agreements. CDRP does not have any statutory planning function but its guidance reports are a material consideration in our decision-making.

- Consider achieving Building for Life, Building with Nature and other established development benchmarking schemes. Where certifications are achieved this should be promoted as they are recognised to add value and help raise the bar.
- Celebrate and help promote high quality and innovative schemes by submitting them to competitions'

There will be occasions when, for reasons of commercial confidentiality, a developer may not be able to carry out a community consultation in advance of a formal Pre-Application. This will make it all the more important to get the Pre-Application process right, in order to avoid surprises later in the process.

This guide recommends that:

- The Local Planning Authority should make Mylor Parish Council aware of the existence and subject of all formal Pre-Applications
- The Local Planning Authority should avoid making any policy commitments during the Pre-Application stage which might constrain later decisions
- Developers engage with Mylor Parish Council at Pre-Application stage jointly to identify the likely interested parties and to smooth the way towards the formal application stage

2.4 The Planning Application stage

Much of Cornwall Council's documentation on engagement in the planning process takes the form of 'advice' and 'recommendations'. For instance, Cornwall Council's document 'Protocol for Local Councils, Cornwall Council, and developers working together on pre-applications advice' says that Applicants and agents 'should' and Cornwall Council officers will 'give a strong steer to Applicants to carry out public engagement work ...'

As far as Mylor is concerned, this Guide strengthens all these steps. Should a developer wish to depart from any principle in the guide, a clear evidenced case justifying this must be submitted in advance of the planning application. Applicants are expected to:

- Consult with Mylor Parish Council to identify those most involved in any development and commit to consulting them
- Follow the PACE process with an absolute minimum of a full public consultation facilitated by Mylor Parish Council. Larger schemes will need to follow the higher levels of consultation
- Explicitly demonstrate in their Design and Access statement that they have adhered to the Cornwall Design Guide
- Explicitly demonstrate in their Design and Access statement that they have adhered to the Mylor Parish Design Guide

Cornwall Council is expected to:

- Share any pre-application advice given to the applicant
- Share any financial projections which underpin any decision on a Policy 10 site

Although the Local Planning Authority has the right of final decision, in the event of any disagreement between the LPA and Mylor Parish Council on Design Aspects of a planning application, the latter is the sole arbiter and interpreter of this document and of community's views and would expect their view to prevail.

3 RELEVANT ADVICE AND GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

National Planning Policy Framework:

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919150612/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2116950.pdf>

Cornwall Area Plan:

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/22936789/adopted-local-plan-strategic-policies-2016.pdf>

Cornwall Design Guide, (at time of writing, review out to consultation):

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-policy/adopted-plans/planning-policy-guidance/cornwall-design-guide/>

AONB Management Plan:

<https://www.cornwall-aonb.gov.uk/management-plan>

Cornwall & IoS Landscape Character Assessment,

http://map.cornwall.gov.uk/reports_landscape_chr/areaCA13.pdf

Permitted development:

https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common_projects/17/extensions_and
<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/12786873/Permitted-Development-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

Consultation bodies

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/3635992/SCI-Consultation-version-Jan-2011.pdf>, paras 89 – 92

Status of neighbourhood plan (statutory status gives neighbourhood plans far more weight than some other local documents, such as parish plans, community plans and village design statements):

https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/NP_Roadmap_online_full.pdf