

4.5 Development in Lower Density Areas

Development in areas that are typically low density can be challenging, particularly in the context of the need to make best use of previously developed land, which includes gardens. This section examines how new development can be designed to make best use of a site and still be sympathetic to the character and appearance of the area.

Site Layout and Design

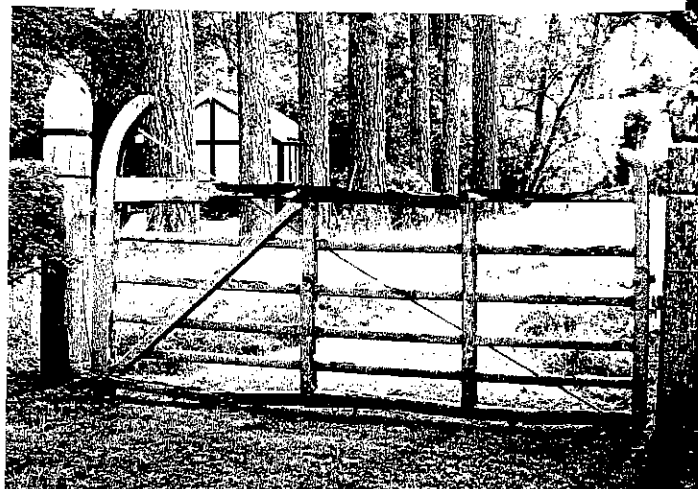
Lower density areas such as Cumnor Hill and Oxford Road in Abingdon are characterised by residential properties set in relatively large, often well landscaped grounds and this characteristic has made such areas attractive for redevelopment proposals. Government advice set out in PPS3 stresses the need for new development to make the best use of previously developed land. However, PPS3 makes it clear that there is no presumption that previously developed land is necessarily suitable for housing development. Development which is permitted must not detract from the character of the area. While PPS3 also says that more intensive development is not always appropriate, when well designed and built in the right location it can enhance the character and quality of an area.

The established form and character of these low density areas should provide the context for the layout and design of any new development. The following matters need to be taken into account when designing developments in lower density areas.

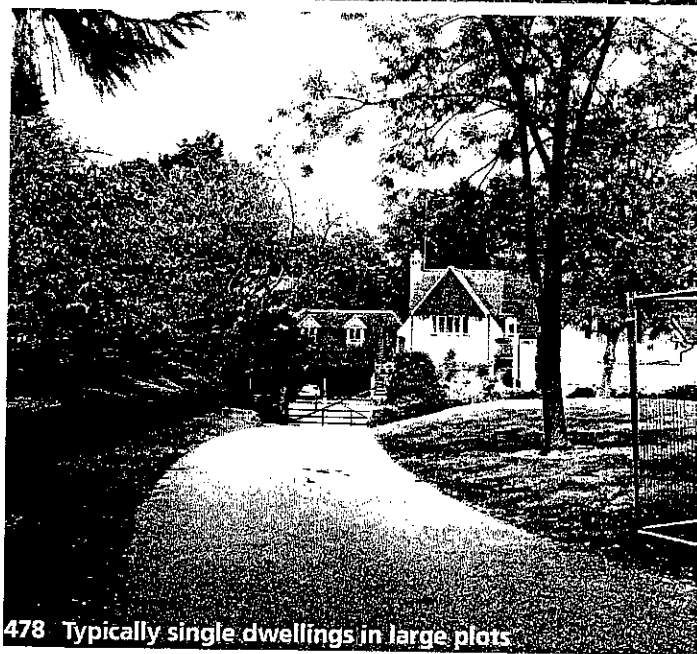
Any new housing development, redevelopment or extension needs to understand the context provided by the architectural scale, modelling and language of the varying range of vernacular styles of these areas.

Any development should have a visual understanding of the residential vernacular tradition and style of the buildings and history of the area.

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477 Characterised by the landscape rather than buildings



478 Typically single dwellings in large plots



479 Large plot sizes can create pressure for redevelopment

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Extensions should be subservient to the existing building but in a manner that allows them to tie in with the style, form and design of the existing building.

Over intensive housing developments should be avoided. One way of increasing density without significantly increasing the number or size of buildings on a site is to incorporate a number of flats into a building which has the appearance of a large dwelling with one dominant front door.

Extensions, new developments or buildings should be set back from street/road frontages to respect the adjacent building lines and general character of the immediate area.

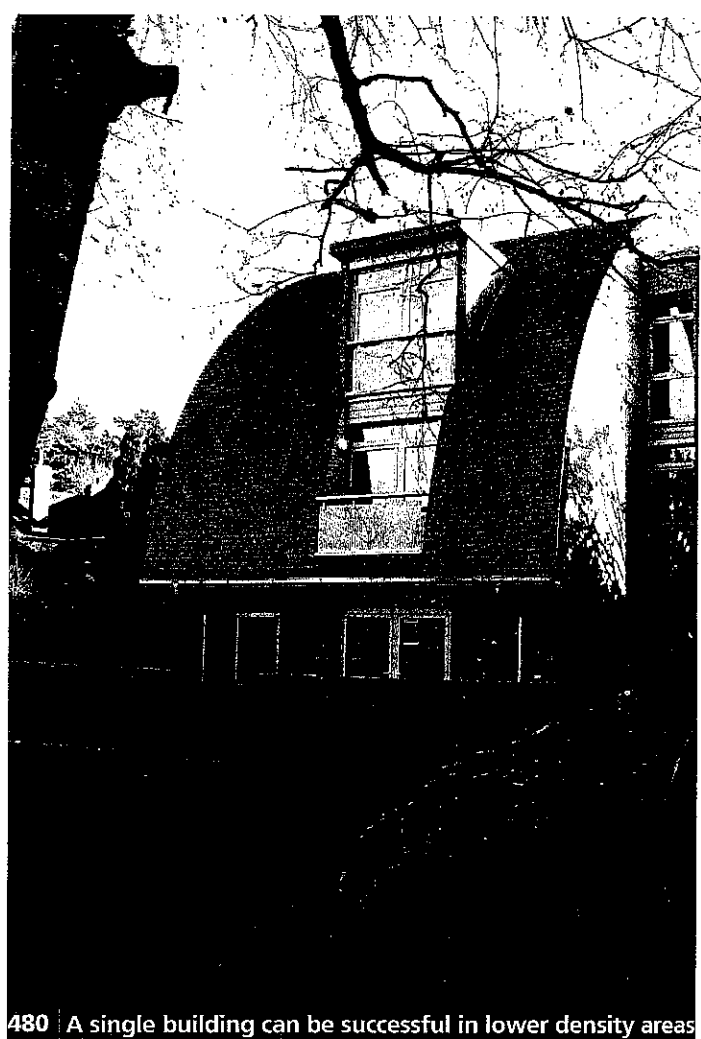
Side boundary separations of at least 2 to 5 metres (depending on the location) should be retained at all levels. Visual gaps that reflect the general character of the immediate area should be retained between buildings on adjacent plots.

All new buildings and extensions fronting a main road should face the street and have an active street frontage.

Buildings fronting main roads should be of an appropriate height and scale, with the potential for additional living space in the roof void. The scale and height of new developments should be in keeping with the general character of the area.

Exterior walls should generally be finished in materials that reflect the general character of the immediate area.

In traditional designs, roofs should normally be pitched, either gabled or hipped and consideration should be given to incorporation of front gables and gablets. Roofs should be tiled with materials that reflect the general character of the immediate area, normally plain clay tiles or slates. Alternatively, in appropriate circumstances the opportunity can be taken to use innovative roofing materials such as copper, zinc or lead in high quality stand-alone buildings.



480 A single building can be successful in lower density areas



481 The bulk and large pitched roofs and gables complement the

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Small gable or hipped roof front, rear and side facing dormer windows and eaves windows could be an acceptable way of providing additional living space without increasing the scale of buildings.

In traditional designs, windows should be wooden casement or sash style windows. Inclusion of bay or bow windows or other appropriate windows at ground and first floor levels could help reflect the general character of the immediate area.

Main entrance doors should be located on the front porches or under verandas. Front doors should be made into a feature through the use of surrounding detail and decoration.

Existing chimney stacks on larger properties should be retained.

Features such as Victorian lamp standards, street furniture, stone walls, fences, railings and pedestrian gates should be retained where possible.

Where possible new telecommunications and power lines should be located underground within development sites.

The front boundary of the site should be defined by either walls, timber fencing, railings and/or hedges to reflect the general character of the immediate area.

Front gardens should be provided with lawns, tree planting, hedges and only small areas of hard surfacing either aggregate or paving. Where hard-surfacing for car parking in front gardens is necessary, it should be screened from view of the street by trees and hedge planting.

Retention of all trees and hedgerows, especially along property boundaries is vital. If trees and hedges do need to be removed, they should be replaced within the site.

Sufficient parking should be provided on site in accordance with current standards. A limited quantity of parking could be provided to the

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482 Care should be taken not to overdevelop the plot and ensure parking does not dominate

front of buildings and should be landscaped and designed in such a manner that it does not dominate the front garden or impact upon the amenity of neighbouring properties in accordance with current standards. Permeable surfacing should be used to limit any off-site surface water impact.

Any garaging required by developments should either be incorporated into the buildings at the ground floor level or provided in detached buildings. Where there is a noticeable slope in the ground, it may be possible to cut a garage building into the slope with landscaping sweeping over the roof.

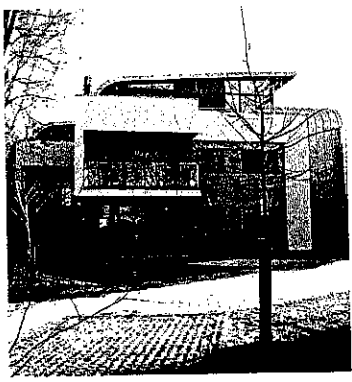
New entranceways and driveways shall be designed and constructed in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council's standards.

Access ways and driveways to developments shall be designed and landscaped to be informal and have a minimal impact. Driveways should be soft (not overly engineered with kerbs and hardsurfacing), well landscaped and boundary hedgerows and plantings should be retained and/or provided. Vision splays should be provided for vehicles and pedestrians in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council's requirements.

Sufficient refuse and recycling storage should be provided. Discrete out of sight secure storage with easy access to the road frontage will be required. The Council will provide advice on the required size of external refuse and recycling storage areas.

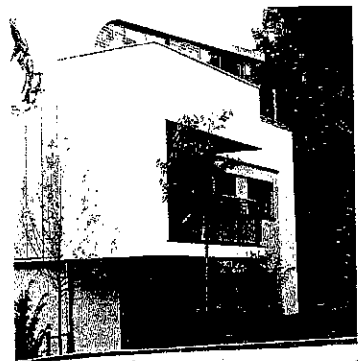
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Case Study Poet's Corner, Cumnor Hill



Mix & Density

Poet's Corner provides a high density development (46 dph) in a relatively low density area. The site, however, does not appear over-developed because of the design approach adopted. The building is similar in size to a large suburban house, which is appropriate to the context. In addition, the overall bulk of the building has been reduced by breaking up the elevations with set-backs and balconies.



Design

Poet's Corner provides a contemporary design approach with three linked blocks arranged around a central stairwell. The window orientation offers natural surveillance of parking areas and circulation routes. The set back of the upper floor ensures that maximum height can be achieved with minimum overlooking.



Materials & Landscaping

The palette of materials provides variety and interest to the elevations, and includes a mix of zinc, render, glass and timber cladding. The mix of materials also helps reduce the perceived bulk of the building.

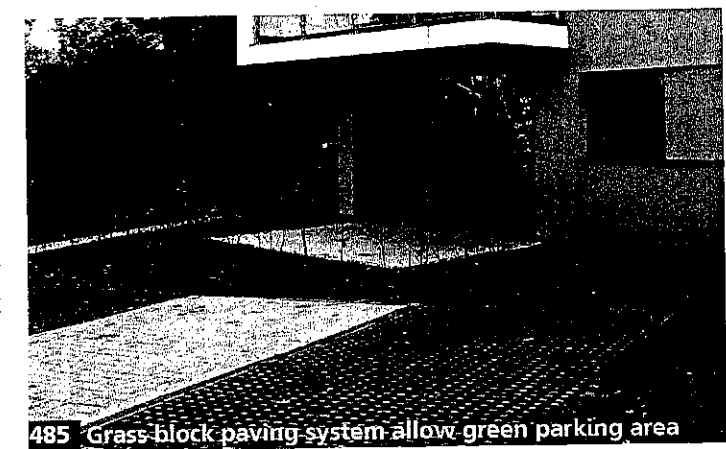
483 Poet's Corner site layout

The retention of much of the site's original landscaping provides an attractive setting for the building and helps to frame key views into the site. The landscaping is relatively mature and so offers an effective screen between the site and adjoining roads. The site's original landscaping has been supplemented with additional planting, including evergreen species such as laurel to provide screening in winter.

484 High density and quality, contemporary design with a mix of materials

Sustainable Development

A positive aspect of the development is the inclusion of sustainable design features. In the parking area, a mix of permeable block paving and "Ecoblock" paving has been used. The development also incorporates rainwater harvesting and photovoltaic cells on the flat area of the roof.



485 Grass-block paving system allow green parking area



486 Contemporary rainwater harvesting