Appendix A

Urban Design Guidelines on Future Development

1. Introduction

These guidelines are aimed at enhancing the traditional character of the village streetscape. They are aimed at giving landowners, developers and their architects a clear view as to how the design of a new infill development should be considered. It will also be used by the Planning Authority when judging subsequent planning applications.

The Planning Authority also acknowledges that many planning applications are not submitted by individuals with professional qualifications in architecture and/or design. These guidelines will therefore also assist applicants, including their designers, in drawing attention to some of the more important issues of design and layout.

2. The Importance of Good Design

Good design can enhance the attractiveness and quality of a place, making it a place that people like to visit, work and live in. It therefore has many benefits for the entire community.

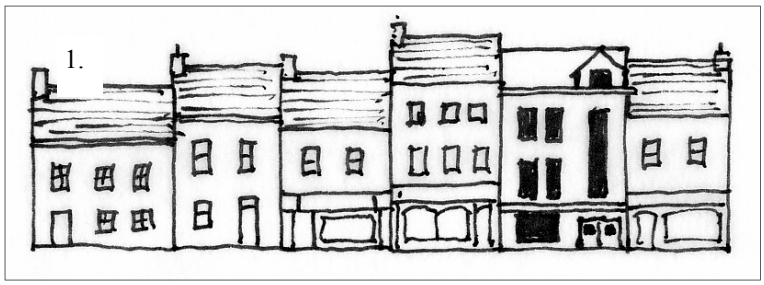
When designing for a new infill building, consideration should always be given to the existing building fabric, for it is the existing pattern and appearance of these buildings , related to the unique history and morphology of a place, that makes one village or town different from the next. The building fabric therefore is a reflection of the character of a place and if we permit this character to be eroded, either though dereliction, decay and/or demolition and replacement with insensitive new build, then we erode the uniqueness of the place.

Therefore, where possible, consideration should always be given to building conservation. Where conservation is not possible, as in cases where there is already a gap in the streetscape, or where a conservation architect or other specialist in the area considers a building as structurally unsound or prohibitively expensive to merit conservation, then consideration will need to be given to designing a new building.

3. Basic Considerations in Designing New Infill Development

The insertion of a new building into an older area, requires a very careful and sensitive approach. However, good a new building is, there must be proper attention given to its effect on its surroundings, in particular, the manner in which it relates to its adjacent buildings in the streetscape. In this regard, it is important that the building is 'contextually compatible' - this requires an examination of the context in terms of historical plot width, building height, established building lines, fenestration pattern, roof profile, materials, local features or other distinctive elements.

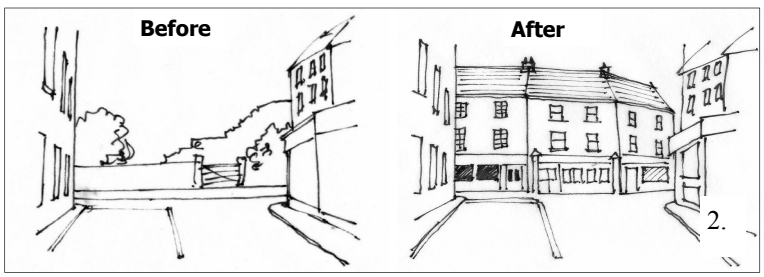
In order for a building to be contextually compatible, however, it does not mean that it has to follow each of these characteristics in a slavish manner, this would only result in pastiche - a mimic of the past. Rather the architect or designer should view these elements of context and select components in the design of the new infill development. For example, the new building might adhere to the established building height, building line and plot width, but might introduce some new materials or fenestration pattern, which nonetheless respect context (see Sketch 1).

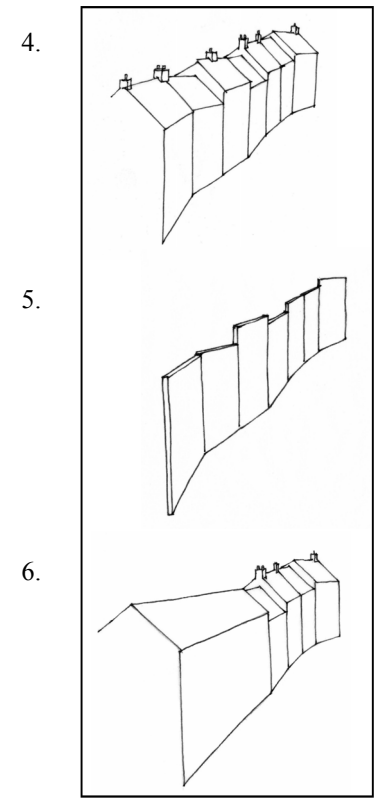


Respecting Plot Widths

Traditionally, plots in towns and villages are relatively long and narrow, reflecting Medieval burgage plots. This is reflected in the facades of buildings and their narrow widths along the street front (See Sketches 1, 2 & 3).

New infill development that extends over more than one historic plot, should address the plot through design, with variations in façade composition that echo the historical plot pattern (Sketch 2).

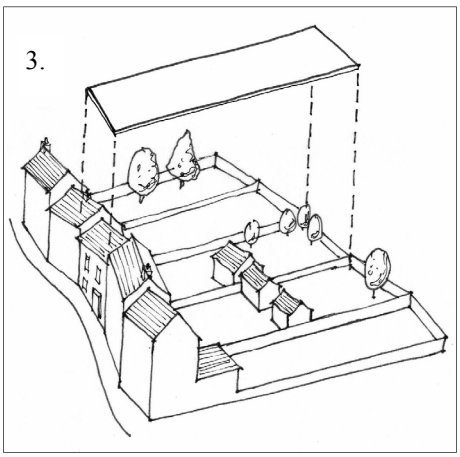




Building Lines and Building Heights

Sketches 4 & 5 (Above): Note how the building lines meander and deflect. Note also how building heights tend to vary with a limited range. These are important principles of the Irish streetscape as reflected in Kilkenny's villages.

Plot Amalgamation - Sketch 6: While the scale of the building is generally consistent with what was there before, plot amalgamation, demolition and new build, have erased the traditional character and resulted in an unsatisfactory composition in the streetscape.



Building Lines and Building Heights

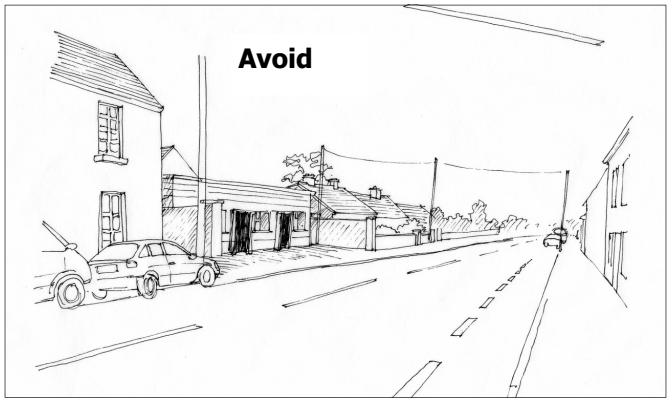
Sketch 8: In some sections of the street, the building line and building heights will be consistent and almost perfectly straight.

In such cases, new infill development will be expected to conform with the established building line.

Sketch 9: Typically, however, the building line will be almost continuous, but will also be continuously deflecting, with subtle twists and turns.

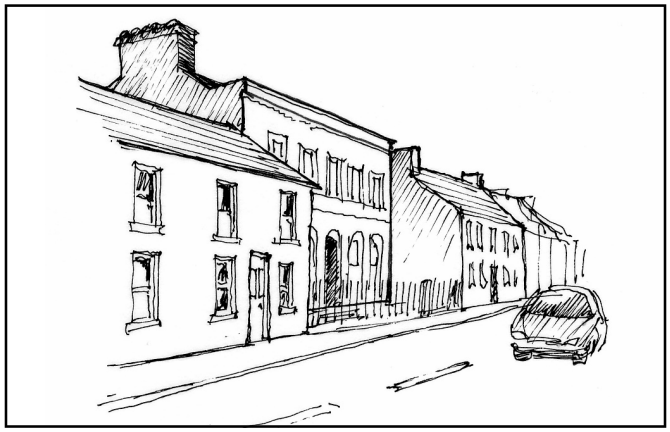
New infill development should respect this pattern and acknowledge it in its design. Where a new infill opportunity spans across two traditional plots (as a result of plot amalgamation), the new design should consider re-introducing a deflection.

Many examples exist in Kilkenny's towns and villages where an individual building façade introduces a deflection in its building line - typically on bends within the street.

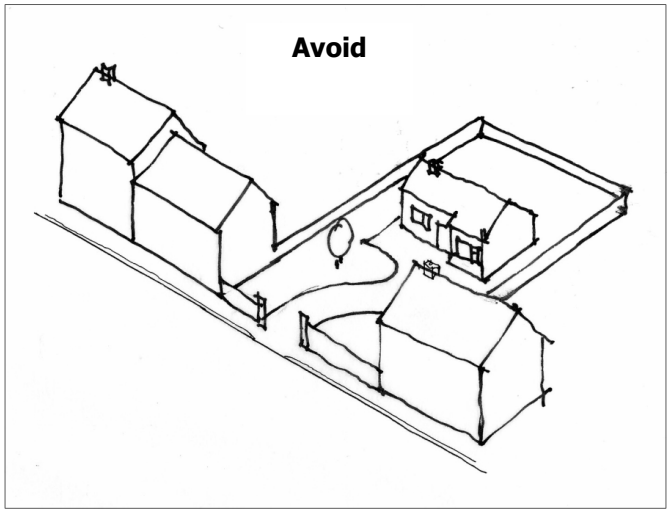


Note also how building heights are not perfectly straight but continually step up and down within a limited range. This feature and the chimneys introduce a strong rhythm in the streetscape and should be acknowledged in new infill designs.

Sketch 10: New infill development should avoid disrupting established building lines, as in this example, as it reduces the sense of enclosure and composition of the streetscape.

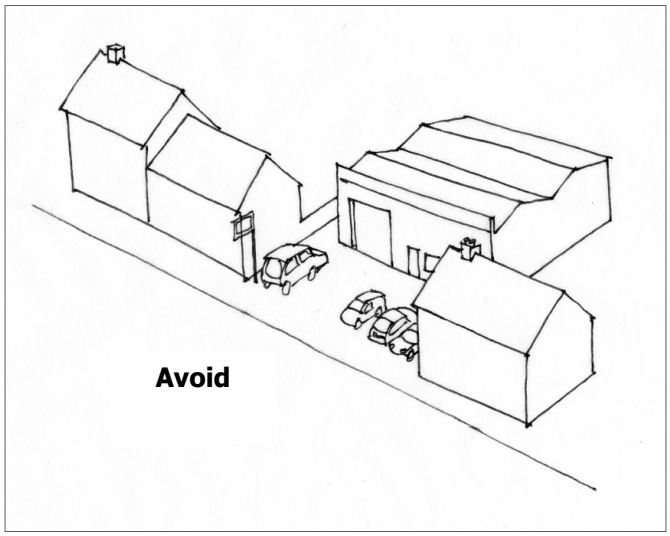


Sketch 11: Traditionally a set-back in building lines was only reserved for important civic buildings, such as Churches, public libraries and other institutional buildings, and occasionally important town houses.

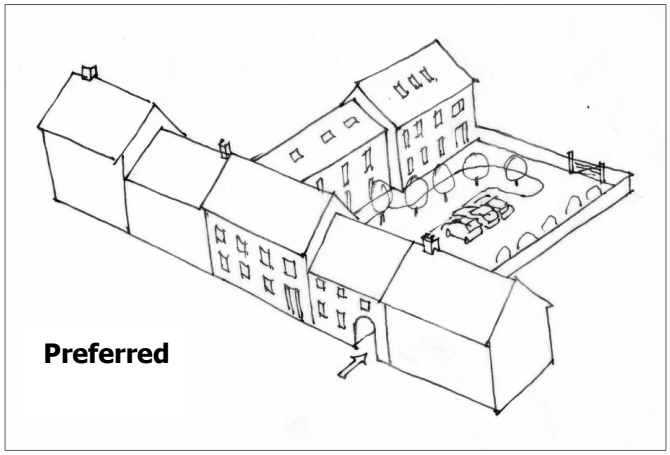


Building Lines and Building Set-Backs

Sketch 12 - Avoid this condition - sub-urban style development in the town or village centre with a disruption of traditional building line.



Sketch 13: Avoid this Condition - disruption of building line associated with large commercial development.



Sketch 14: Preferred option for infill development - building line re-established and backlands opened up for more comprehensive development, such as residential townhouses, apartments and/or offices.

Building Height:

Sketch 15:
The number of storeys is not a good judge of building height. Note in this example, all of the buildings are two storeys high, yet considerable variation in height occurs.

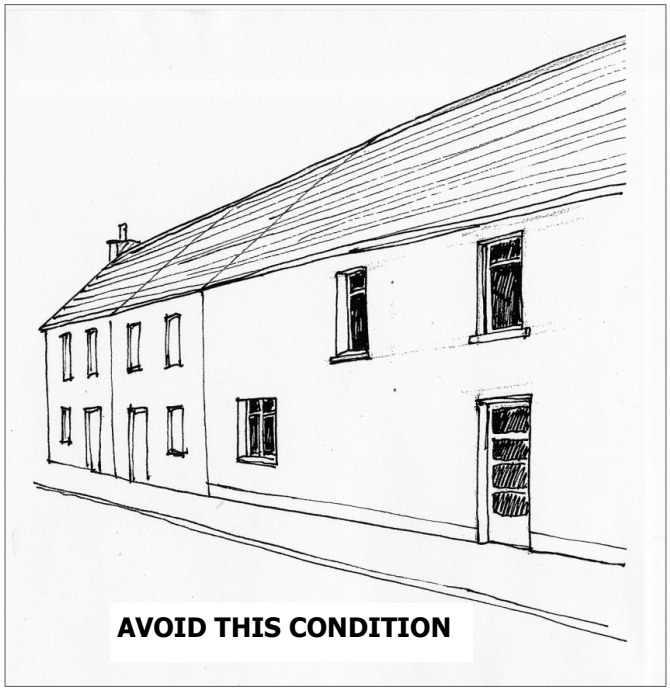
Though the scale and mass of the larger building on the left may appear out of character, it maintains traditional building line and façade composition, namely the vertical emphasis of the window, and therefore sits comfortably in the streetscape.

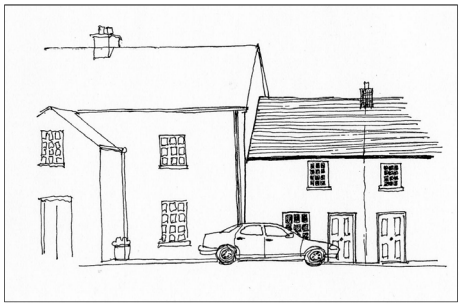
Fenestration Patterns

Sketch 16:
In the above example (Sketch 15) windows maintain the traditional vertical emphasis.

In this example (Sketch 16), the ground floor windows have been inappropriately altered, with a more horizontal empahsis and the pattern and symmetry is lost. This condition should be avoided in the design of new infill development.

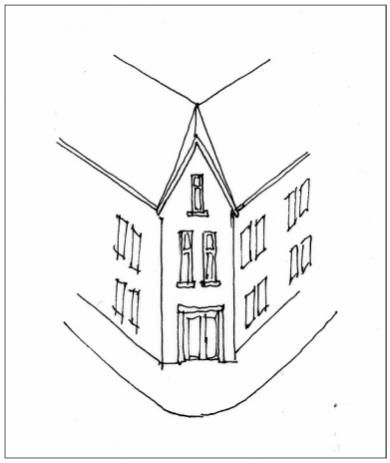
Sketch 17:
Note that while fenestration patterns are generally balanced and symmetrical this is not always the case, as in the example shown below.





Solid to Void Ratio.

Sketch 18:
The solid to void ratio refers to the relationship between the voids (i.e., the window and door openings) to the solid (i.e., proportion of a building façade that comprises a blank or solid wall). A balance should be achieved between the two.



The Treatment of Corners.

Sketches 19 & 20:
Corner sites generally tend to hold more prominent positions in the Irish street-scape and therefore they deserve slightly more elaborate treatments.

This can be achieved by simply stepping up the height on corner sites, or introducing simple design features such as splayed corners (emphasizing entrances - see Sketch 20), curved facades, or appropriately designed turrets.

A prerequisite for the design of any corner building is that they should be orientated to overlook both streets that they are positioned on, as this not only increases natural surveillance of the street, but also enhances the image of the building as viewed from the public realm - the street.