

This Design Guide is a revised version of a draft document which was made available for public discussion and comment between 10th. July 1991 and 11th. November 1991.

It was approved on 20th. January 1994 by the Development Control Committee for the purposes of advice and guidance for development control following advertisement and consultations.



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## **Design Guide 1**

# **DWELLINGS AND DOMESTIC SCALE BUILDINGS**

# OGWR BOROUGH COUNCIL GUIDES TO DESIGN



## FOREWORD

This series of guides to design prepared by the Borough Council has three main aims. They are:

- 1. To make clear the Local Planning Authority's expectations for the design of development.**
- 2. To encourage, as a consequence, development of a high design standard that will result in a benefit in environmental and landscape terms.**
- 3. To reduce the need for revision of the design of proposals, and thus to increase the speed of the determination of planning applications.**

Five secondary aims clarify the criteria for judging the benefit that may be achieved by the design of a development.

Those secondary aims of the design advice are:

- A. To create a positive area image, a sense of local identity.**
- B. To ensure the integration of development into the surrounding area.**
- C. To ensure the protection, and preferably enhancement, of the landscape or the townscape.**
- D. To ensure the protection or enhancement of the appearance or character of areas of special interest or character.**
- E. To ensure the protection or enhancement of the residential amenity of people living in the vicinity of, or who will live in, a development.**

# DWELLINGS

## AND

# DOMESTIC SCALE BUILDINGS

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## Design Guide 1

# DWELLINGS AND DOMESTIC SCALE BUILDINGS

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This is one of a series of design guides prepared by Ogwr Borough Council. It is about local building character as expressed in the design of dwellings and similar domestic scale buildings. It is intended to help building designers understand which design features will strengthen local character in the Borough, and which will not.

1.2. The guide is in two sections. The first considers appropriate design for houses and domestic scale buildings, based on the local traditions of building. The second looks at some other common design features to briefly indicate why they are less appropriate. Both sections are set out in the order: form; materials; details.

1.3. Nothing in this guide is intended to stifle original or individual designs of quality. Such buildings are in fact encouraged, although in the interests of local identity they should preferably be developments of the local traditions of building. The section on appropriate design offers a local vernacular 'language' of architecture which can be used to

make new imaginative architectural statements which can strengthen the character of the Borough.

1.4. More modestly, the section on inappropriate design can be used to avoid the commonplace clichés of placeless buildings and to create buildings which harmonise with traditional design. By reinforcing harmony such buildings can be a local visual asset even if architecturally undistinguished.

1.5. The aims of the design guide series are set out in the foreword. Within these aims this particular guide has the following objectives:

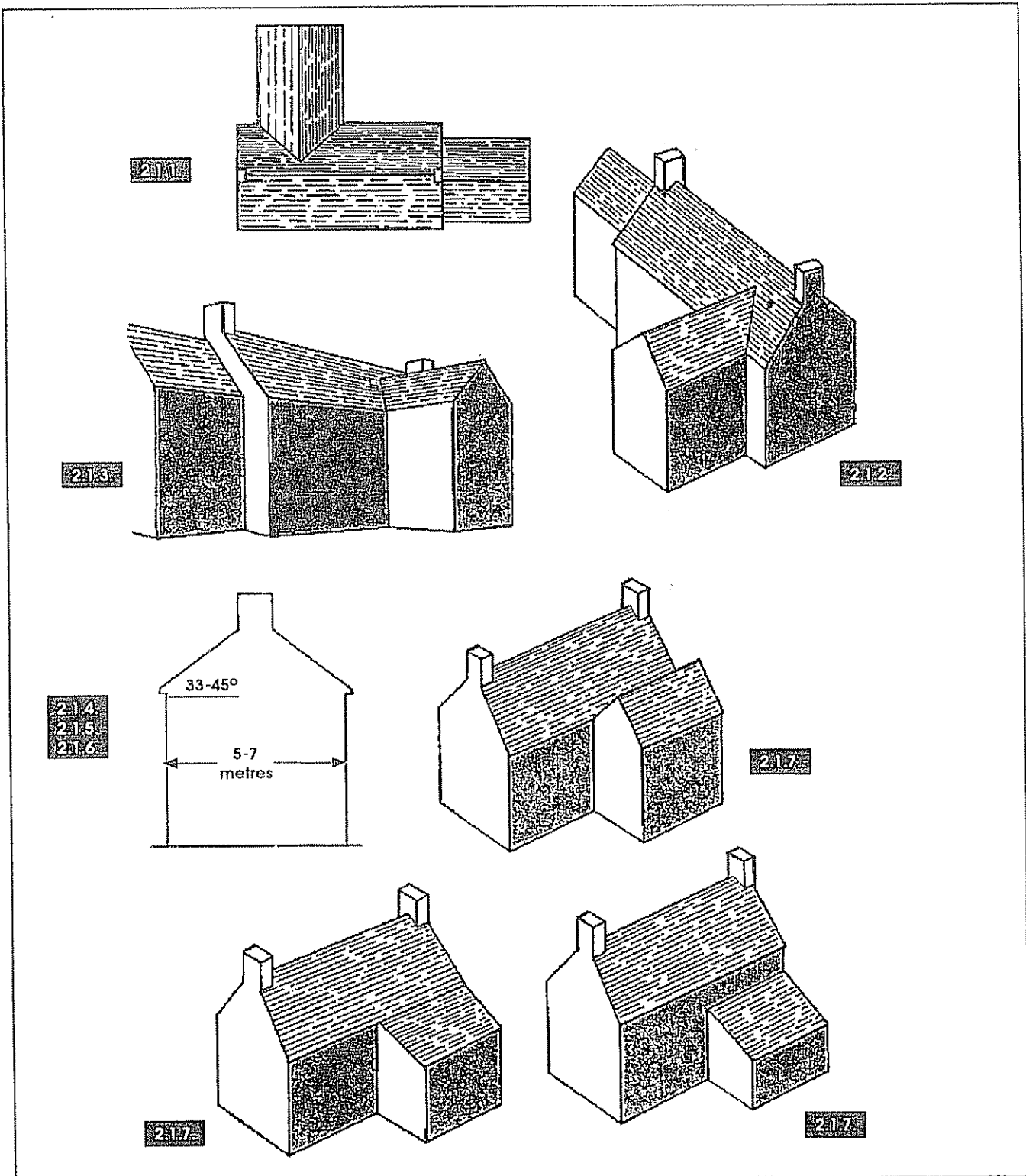
- a. *to promote imagination and high quality design;*
- b. *to encourage respect for the surroundings of a proposal;*
- c. *to ensure that local identity is retained and made stronger.*

1.6. The Borough Council prefers to achieve these aims by persuasion. It will normally only exercise control over the design of a proposal if justified by the sensitive character of the area or the particular building.

1.7. Sensitive areas are primarily the Conservation Areas, Commercial Improvement Areas, the Heritage Coast, and the open countryside. Other sites may be considered as sensitive in design terms if they form part of the setting of a listed building or if there is a significant visual relationship with an adjoining Conservation Area. A particular building may be sensitive if it is a Listed Building or if its scale or location will make it a prominent feature of the environment.

1.8. There are few sites where architectural experiments which make no reference to their context can be successful, although very occasionally the result can be a building of the highest national quality. If such a design is being considered, or if the proposed site is in a sensitive area, an early discussion with the officers of the Planning Department is strongly recommended.

1.9. The Borough Council's other design guidance may also be of interest. Reference should be made to the current issue of 'Planning Publications' for the full range of booklets now in print.



## 2. APPROPRIATE DESIGN

### 2.1. Form

2.1.1. The basic ground plan of the traditional house is a rectangle or a conjunction of rectangles.

2.1.2. Each rectangle has a gabled roof, its ridge parallel with the longest side.

2.1.3. One roof is dominant, its

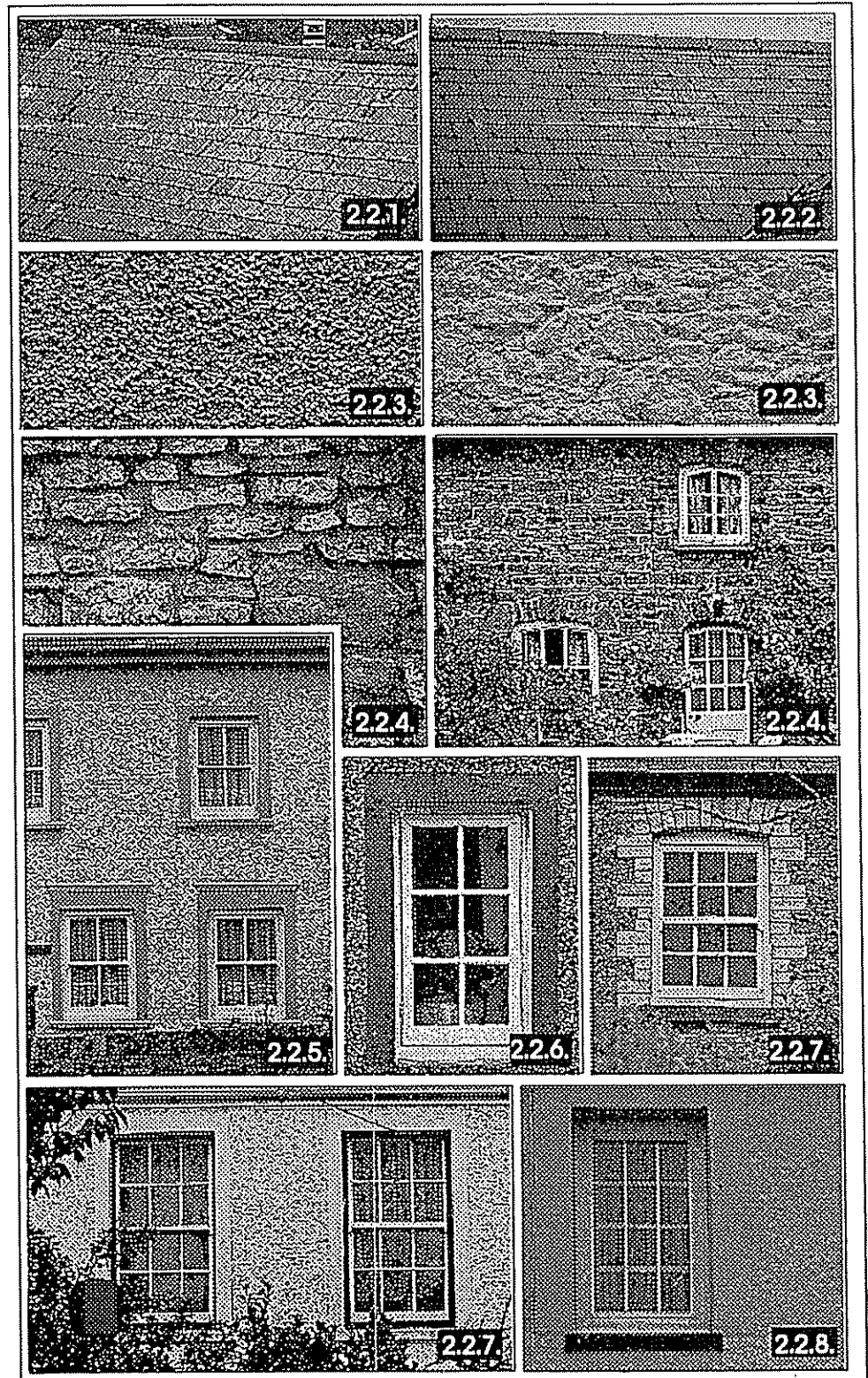
ridge higher than the others.

2.1.4. Roofs are pitched at between 33 degrees and 45 degrees to the horizontal with the most satisfactory appearance being given by a roof having a 35 degree to 40 degree slope.

2.1.5. Gable ends are symmetrical.

2.1.6. Roof spans are normally in the range 5-7 metres.

2.1.7. Extensions may be gabled, or lean-to, or have a cat-slide roof. In the last case there should be a clear change in pitch at the junction of the main roof and that of the extension.



## 2.2. Materials

2.2.1. Roofs are of slate or a visually close substitute.

2.2.2. Ridge tiles are black or terracotta red.

2.2.3. Walls are rendered, either roughcast or wood-float-finished smooth render, or colour-washed stone. If there is a low plinth it

should be of local stone or a blue, grey or black brick.

2.2.4. Rubble stone with brick or squared stone dressings can be appropriate, but rarely.

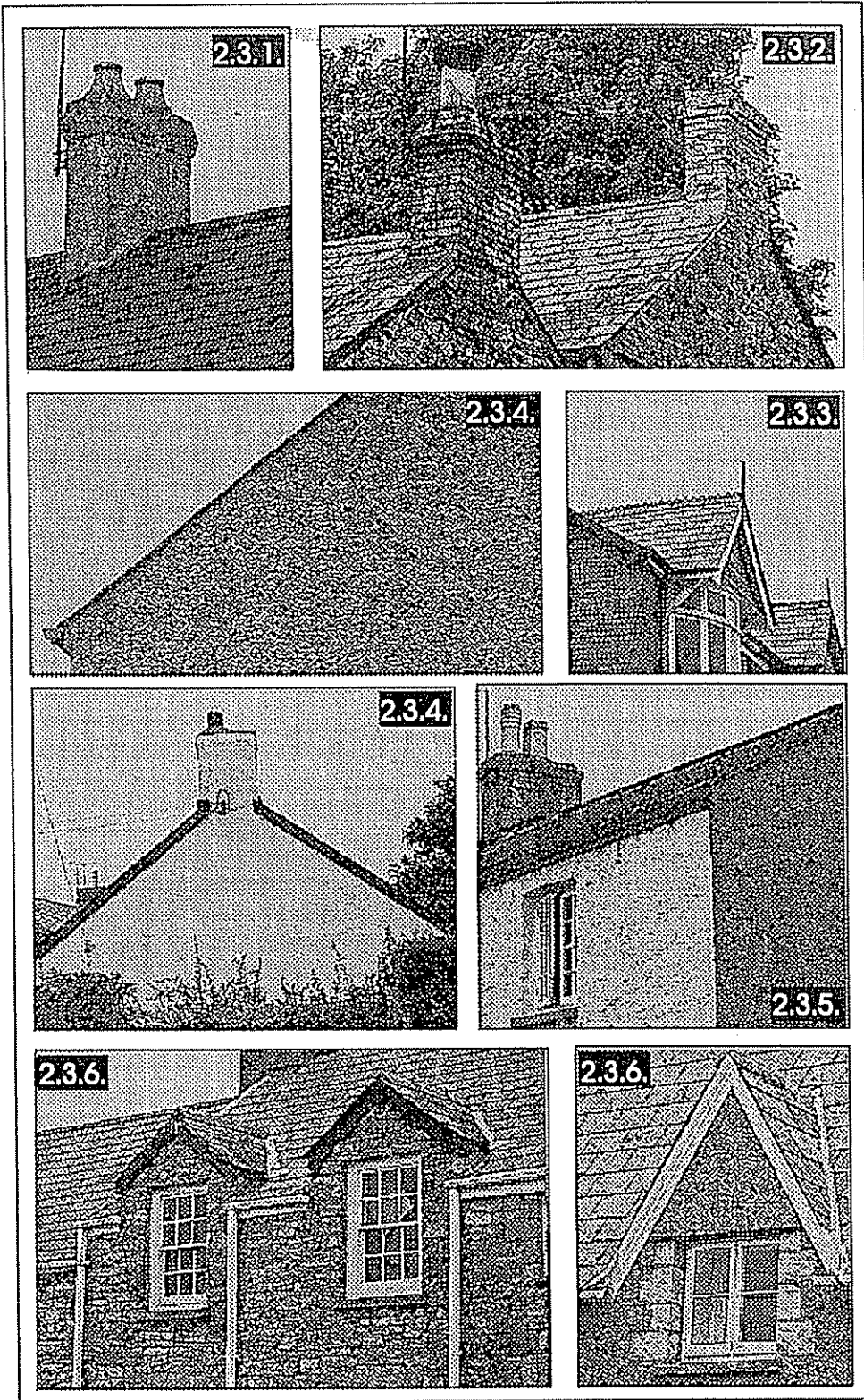
2.2.5. Off-white or pastel colour finishes are preferable to brilliant white.

2.2.6. Windows surrounded by a raised smooth cement band, often

picked out in colour, are a local characteristic.

2.2.7. Window frames are white on coloured buildings or white within a coloured sub-frame on white buildings.

2.2.8. Window frames are best in wood, but metal and pvcU can be acceptable depending on the design of the frame and the degree of sensitivity of the area.



## 2.3. Details

2.3.1. One or more chimneys improve the silhouette of a building and symbolise residential use. They should be of an adequate size - approximately 0.45 metres x 0.75 metres (18" x 30") - sited at the ridge with the shorter side parallel with the ridge.

2.3.2. In local building chimneys

are generally flush with and rise from the gable wall.

2.3.3. Fretted ridge tiles, and decorative finials are other embellishments of the silhouette which may be appropriate.

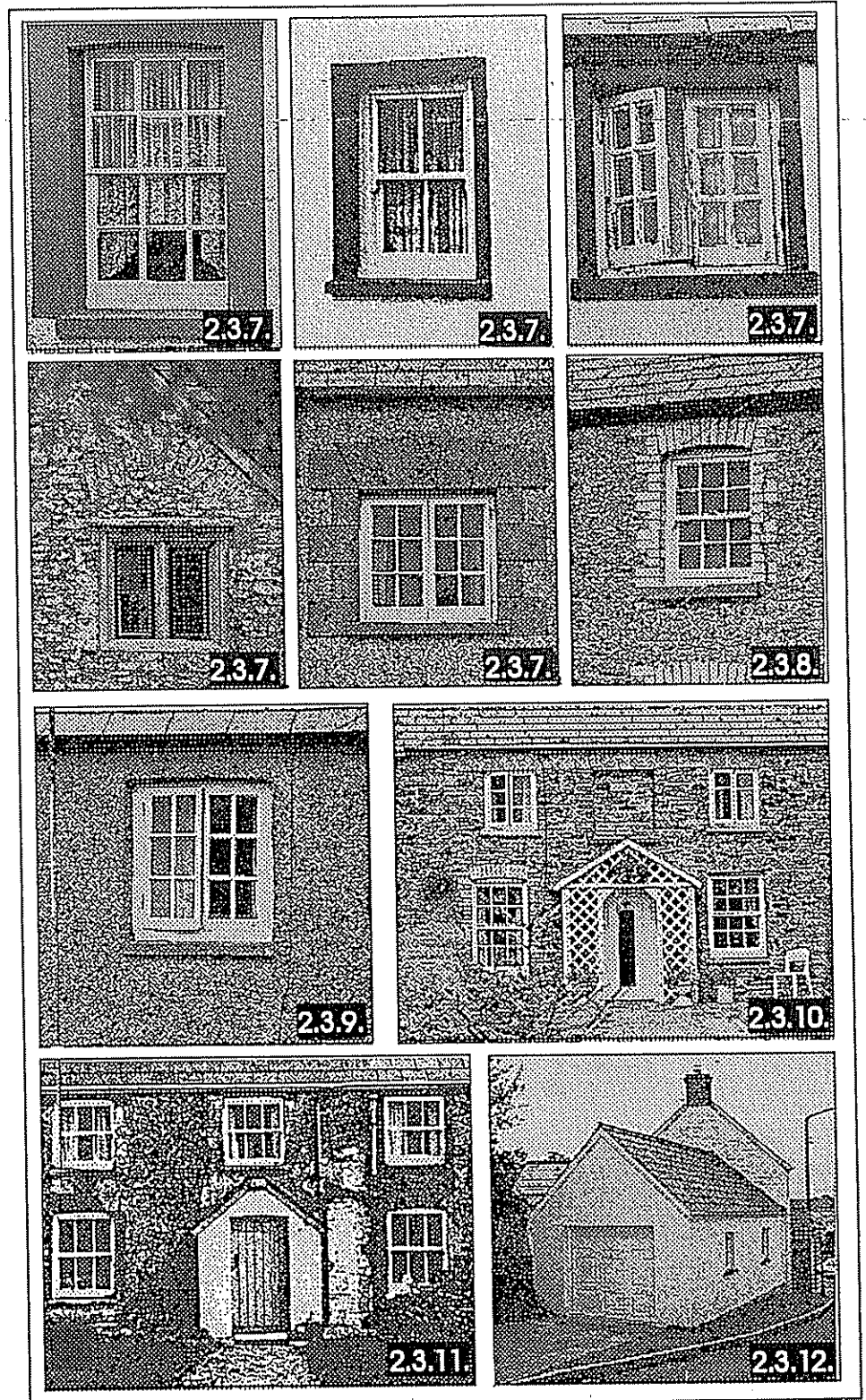
2.3.4. Verges are finished flush, or with a coping or a coped parapet, or with a slender barge board fitted close to the wall.

2.3.5. Eaves have little overhang and are finished either with no fascia or with only a narrow board.

2.3.6. Dormers are uncommon, but where they are used are narrow, gabled and rise through the eaves directly from the wall.

2.3.7. Windows are symmetrical and have a vertical emphasis. Sash windows (twelve pane and





four pane) are common. Four pane cottage casements with a strong central mullion and stone-mullioned windows are also part of the local tradition of building.

2.3.8. Window openings often have segmental arched heads.

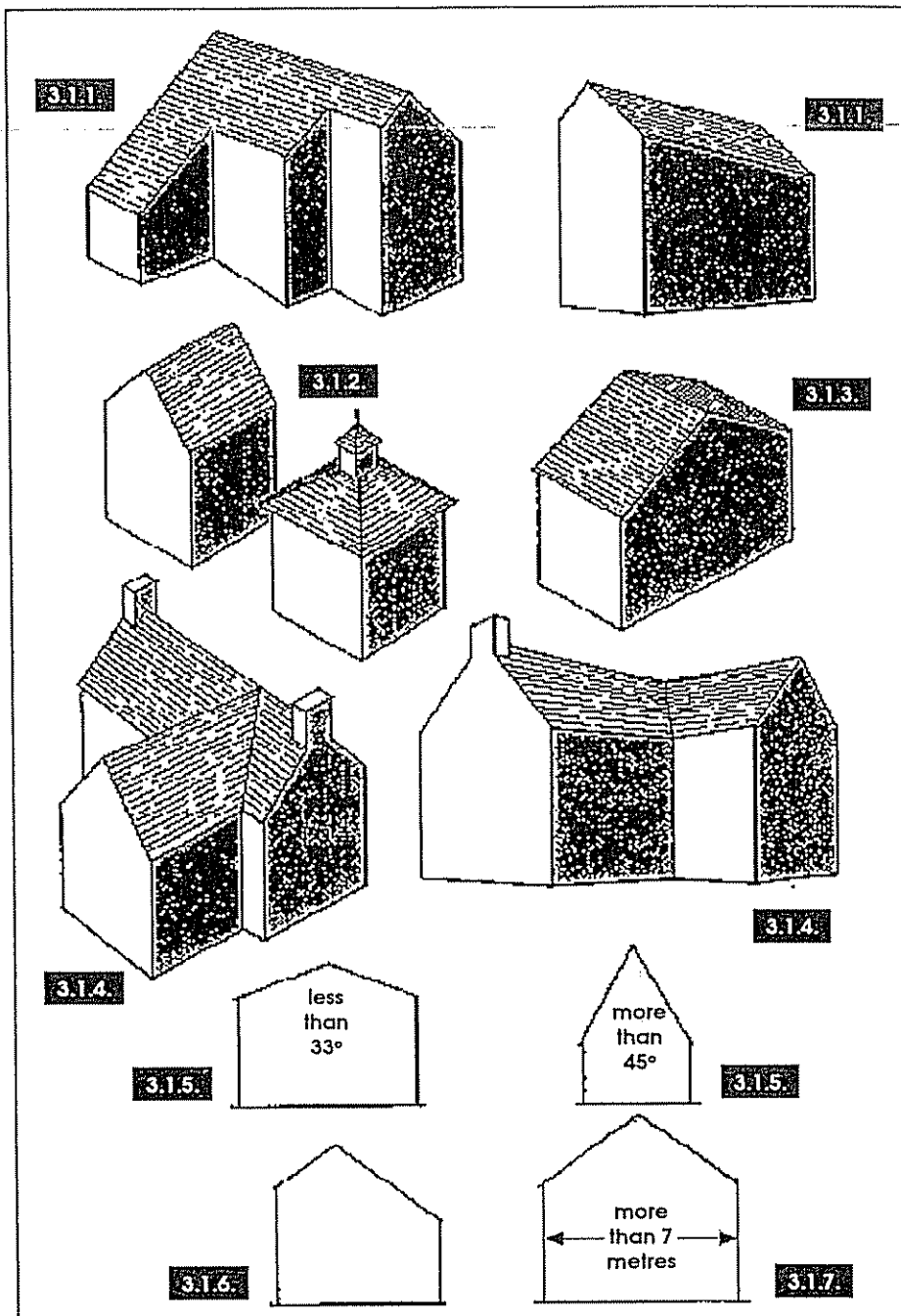
2.3.9. First floor windows are normally separated from the eaves by an area of wall.

2.3.10. The front door is the focal point of an elevation. It is the centre of enrichment and decoration, either in a doorcase or a porch.

2.3.11. Porches are generally small, in materials matching the house, and have a gabled slate roof.

2.3.12. Garages are most appropriate when they match the

materials of the house. They may be attached as a lean-to, or be separate gabled structures.



### 3. INAPPROPRIATE DESIGN

#### 3.1. Form

3.1.1. An irregular plan covered by a single roof tends to look awkward. From some angles it can look as if some parts of the building are missing. (This is sometimes known as subtractive form.)

3.1.2. A square plan seems indeterminate if covered by a gabled roof, but it can be a very strong and stable form if covered by a pyramidal roof. Embellished with a finial, or, better still, a cupola, it is a good form for occasional use as a landmark. An adequate roof overhang is

needed to give a completed appearance.

3.1.3. A rectangular plan with a ridge parallel to the shortest side appears clumsy and is often grossly out of scale with surrounding buildings because of the span and rise of the roof.

3.1.4. If ridge lines of intersecting roofs are at the same level the building loses clarity of form.

3.1.5. Both very shallow pitch and very steeply pitched roofs can look out of place, particularly in sensitive areas. The former creates heavy, flattened, unsatisfying gables which can rarely be

justified. The latter has a soaring Gothic quality which can be exploited on occasion for a particular effect, but which can also detract from an existing harmony of form.

3.1.6. Asymmetrical gable ends appear restless and unbalanced. Although not entirely satisfactory, a reduced pitch cat-slide roof is better and is seen in older buildings. An alternative approach using symmetrical gables is, however, to be preferred.

3.1.7. Roofs that span more than 7 metres tend to make a new building seem out of scale with traditional buildings.



### 3.2. Materials

3.2.1. Concrete tiles are thicker than slate and are never a visual substitute. The heavy horizontal shadow lines of smooth tiles are aggressively mechanical in character. A lightly profiled tile introduces a texture which is both down the slope of the roof as well as across it, and is, for that reason, preferable to a smooth interlocking tiles. It would rarely however,

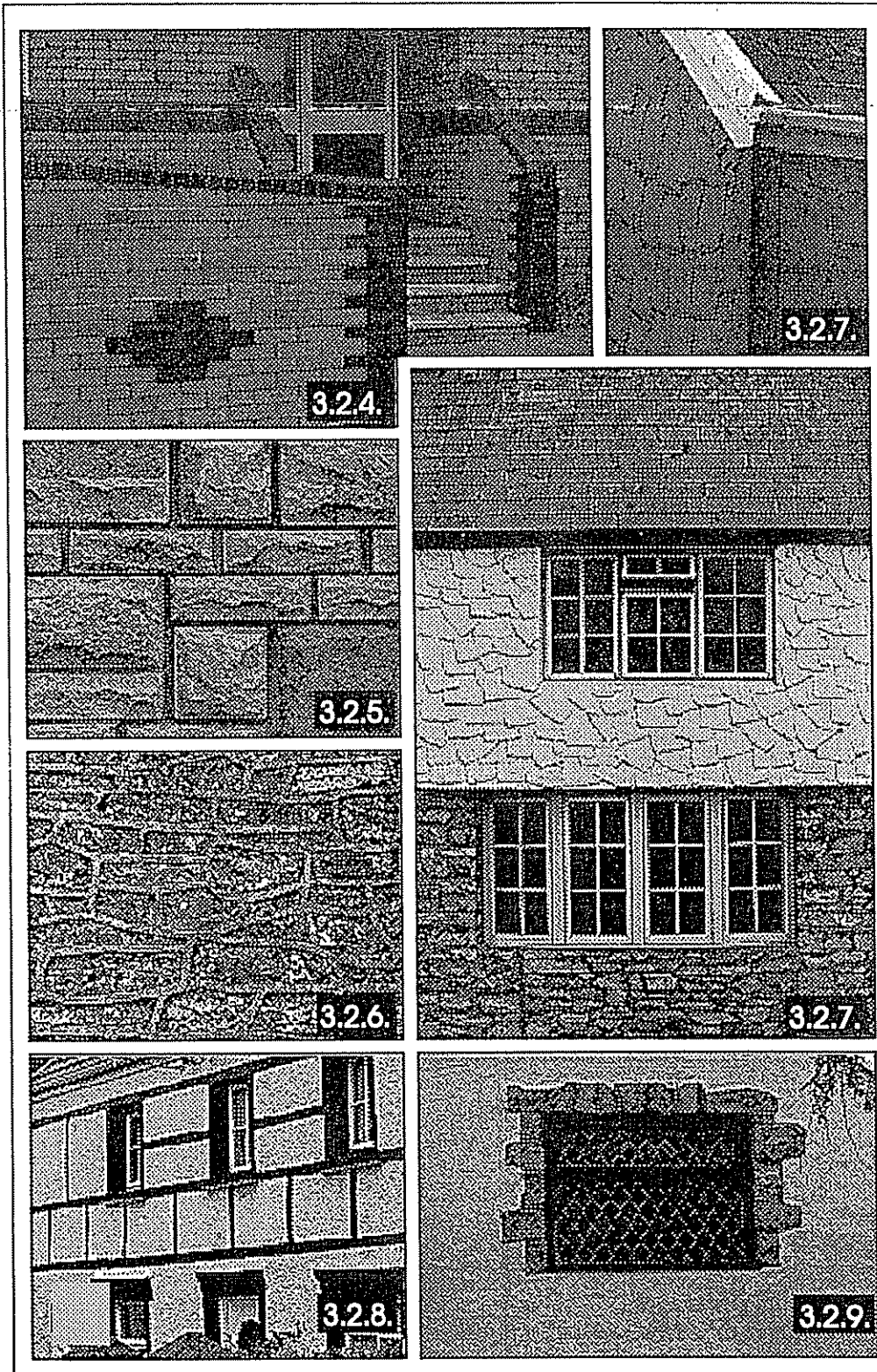
be appropriate in a sensitive area.

3.2.2. Pantiles, or their concrete substitutes have too strong a regional character to be appropriate in the Borough. They are of Eastern England rather than South Wales.

3.2.3. Red tiles generally are alien to the area. Even brown tiles have an uncomfortably warm tone in a landscape whose characteristic

building colours are the cool whites, blues, and greys of lime-wash, limestone and slate.

3.2.4. Brick is rarely suited to the sensitive areas. Where it is used the pattern making opportunities of polychrome brickwork can and should be used to give character and identity. The overall colour of brick buildings is better if not assertive, but patterning needs to be clearly contrasted with the



base brick if its value is to be appreciated.

3.2.5 . Reconstituted stone cladding is a very poor imitation of real stone. Its use will ruin a building's appearance and can damage its structure.

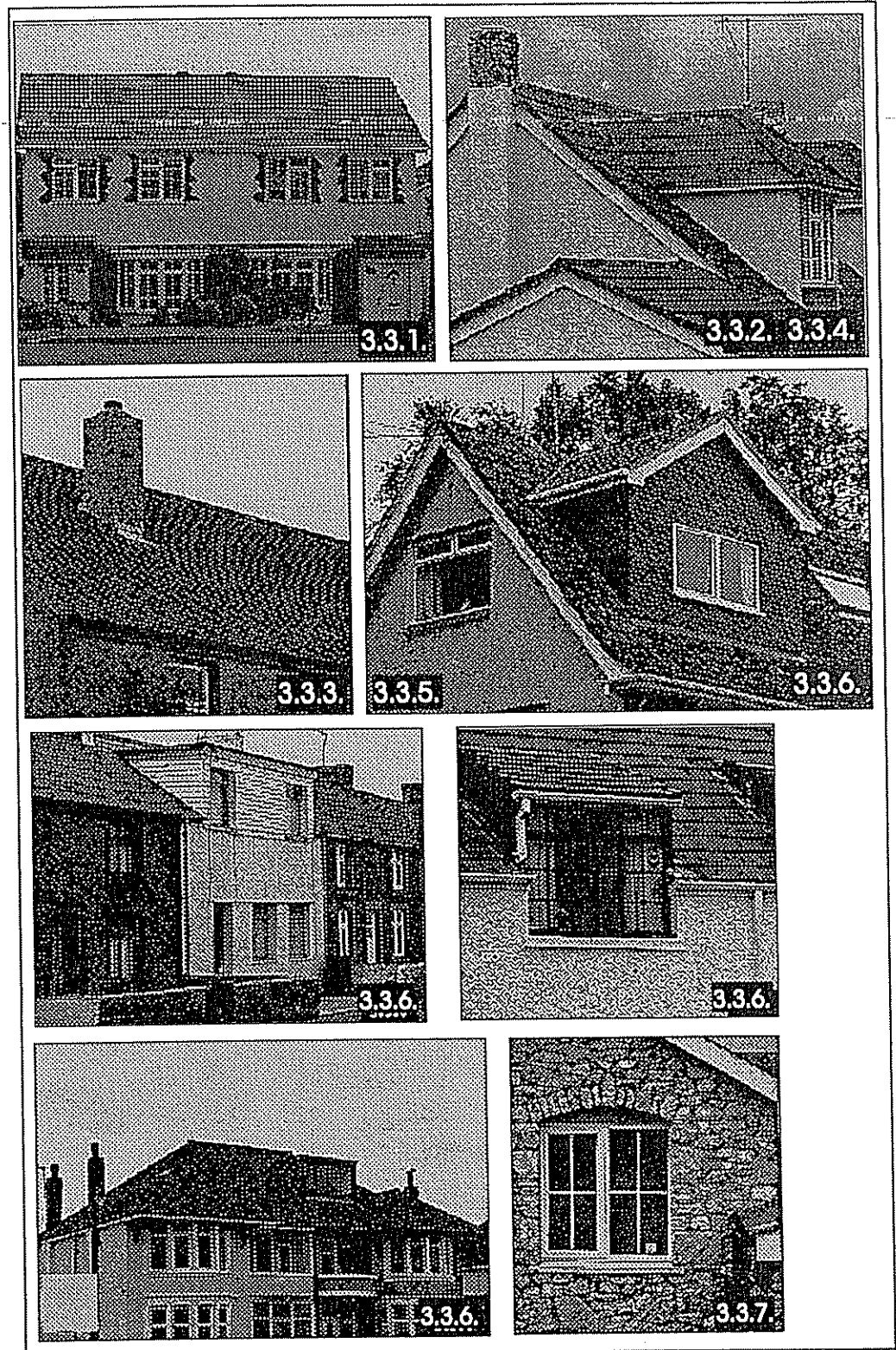
3.2.6 . Stone walls should not be finished with the unsightly and damaging 'snail creep' pointing

3.2.7. Half stone and half render finishes are not recommended, and render should not be given bizarre trowelled textures.

3.2.8. Tudor style timber framing can range from the convincing to the hopelessly inept. Because timber framing is alien to the local traditions of building it is unsuitable for use in sensitive areas. Where it is used it should have an air of

authenticity rather than being an impoverished gimmick.

3.2.9. Dark finishes for window frames are generally unsatisfactory because the frames merge into the darkness of the glazed areas. From a distance the result is a building that seems to have windowless voids in the facade. Only where this effect is desired, as in some barn conversions, are dark frames appropriate.



### 3.3. Details

3.3.1. Without a chimney a house looks incomplete. It lacks the symbol of habitation and the unbroken roof line looks dull and heavy.

3.3.2. Too small a chimney can look weak. It is an inadequate punctuation of the building's silhouette.

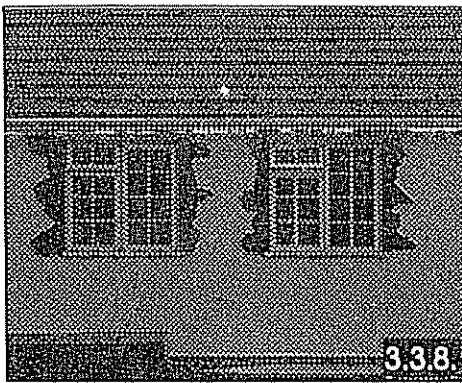
3.3.3. A chimney on the slope of the roof appears unstable. It is better either anchored to the ridge or supported by a wall.

3.3.4. A standard chimney outside the gable wall, rather than flush with it, can look weak. A large feature chimney is uncharacteristic of local building. Neither detail is suited to the sensitive areas.

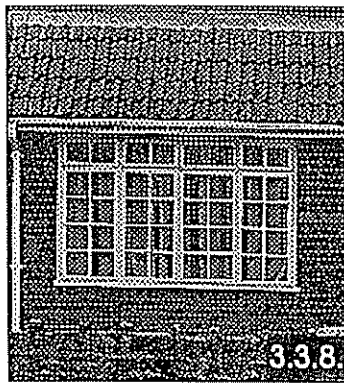
3.3.5. Widely overhanging verges have an alien 'Swiss Chalet' character. The addition of wide barge boards with an angled fillet joining to boxed eaves gives an eye-catching clumsy look.

3.3.6. Flat roofed dormers or wide gabled dormers are alien, and usually jarring, features.

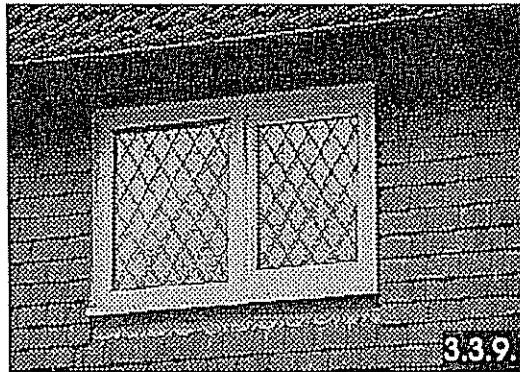
3.3.7 Asymmetrical windows lack visual stability.



3.3.8.



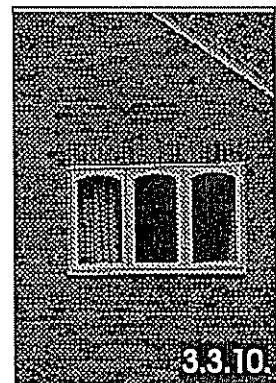
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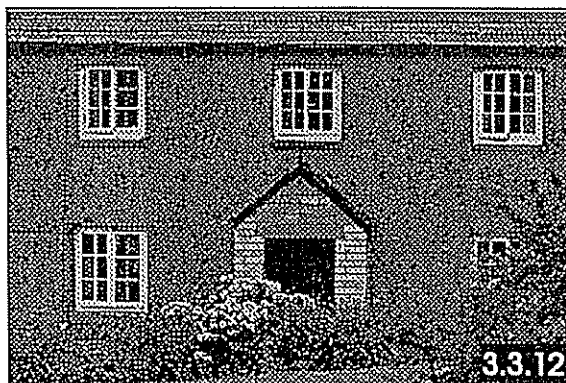
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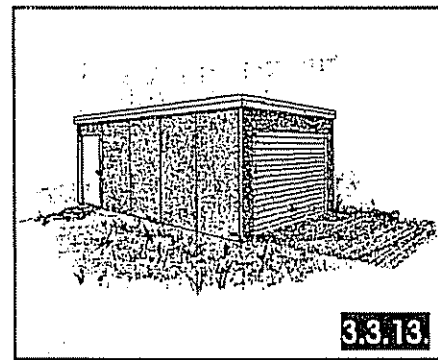
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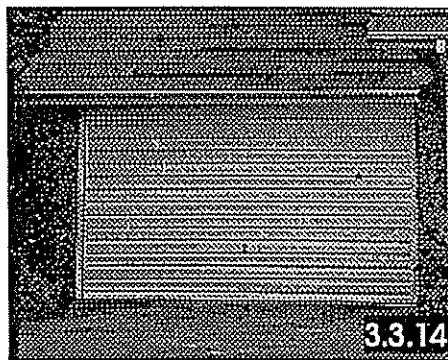
3.3.10.



3.3.12.



3.3.13.



3.3.14.

3.3.8. The standard small pane 'Georgian' window is never suitable for use in sensitive areas.

3.3.9. Leaded lights are often specified for 'period character' but usually succeed only in looking suburban. Like developer's 'Georgian' windows they have become a devalued gimmick.

3.3.10. Some standard windows now available have segmental

heads to each pane of glass. This form of decoration tends to appear fussy and is a poor substitute for the structural arch that defines the window opening.

3.3.11 A large porch incorporating a cloakroom can too easily be out of scale. It also devalues the entrance if the door is off-centre.

3.3.12 Any porch in materials contrasting with those of the main

dwelling needs careful consideration. Particularly unfortunate are porches in stone or brick added to a rendered building. The contrast of materials divorces the form of the porch from the house, with unsettling visual results.

3.3.13. Prefabricated garages in corrugated materials or pre-cast concrete panels are rarely visually pleasing, and should not be used on publicly visible sites in sensitive

areas, or prominent sites elsewhere.

3.3.14. Garage doors with a horizontal emphasis, or those with panelling resembling internal joinery, rarely add to visual harmony particularly when used for integral garages. They are out of character with simple traditional building forms.

#### 4. FURTHER INFORMATION

4.1. These notes can only offer general advice. If it is not clear how the advice notes apply to a particular dwelling or domestic scale building the proposal may be discussed with staff of the Borough Planning Department. Letters should be addressed to:

**Mr. N. A. McGaw B.Sc., MRTPI,  
The Borough Planning Officer, Ogwr Borough Council,  
P.O. Box 4, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, Mid  
Glamorgan. CF31 1LX.**

If telephoning, ring Bridgend (0656) 643643 and ask for the Planning (Development Control) Section. The Design Guide reference to quote is **DG.1**.

