The Cotswold Design Code is essential reading for developers, architects and builders in Cotswold District. It covers in detail:

- The Cotswold Style
- Setting
- Harmony and Street Scene
- Proportion
- Simplicity, Detail and Decoration
- Materials
- Craftsmanship
THE CHALLENGE OF GOOD DESIGN

The Cotswolds is an outstandingly beautiful area, rich in architecture of every period and style. Virtually every town and village contains set pieces, ranging from a scatter of cottages around a green, to gently curving town streets and market places.

The design quality achieved in the past was generally very high, not just in the work of nationally known architects, but also in the sense of proportion, place and ‘rightness’ that seems to have been intuitive throughout generations of local builders. Local standards of traditional craftsmanship have been exceptionally good for hundreds of years. Today’s developers, architects and builders are presented with an opportunity and a challenge to their professions.

The quality of design in new development is perhaps the most obvious measure by which most people judge the planning system. The public’s expectations in this respect have been rising.

Cotswold District Council is determined to raise the standards of layout and design of new development. Planning decisions taken now will result in development that will last well into the future. Future generations will judge us by the quality of what we build. To guide applicants and help raise standards, the Council has drawn up the Cotswold Design Code.

The Code Covers:
- The Cotswold Style
- Setting
- Harmony and Street Scene
- Proportion
- Simplicity, Detail and Decoration
- Materials
- Craftsmanship

The Status of the Cotswold Design Code

The Cotswold Design Code is supplementary planning guidance, amplifying and illustrating the principles set out in the Cotswold District Local Plan.

Policy 40: The Cotswold Design Code

New development shall comply with the Cotswold Design Code, in respect of the Cotswold Style, setting, harmony, street scene, proportion, simplicity, materials and craftsmanship.

The Code is a material consideration in all planning decisions which involve building work in Cotswold District. The Code carries considerable weight in decision making, having been subject to scrutiny and amendment through wide public consultation and the Local Plan Inquiry.
THE COTSWOLD STYLE

A first class original modern design for a building will be preferable to a poor copy of a past style. Original modern designs should, however, reflect the existing distinctive Cotswold style. The exception might be in the newly created lakeside settings of the Cotswold Water Park, but only where they would not be seen in the context of an existing village, or where the scale or function of the building is such that the characteristics of the traditional Cotswold style cannot reasonably be applied. In such cases, buildings should still exhibit the highest standards of original modern architecture, and be in keeping with their surroundings.

Understanding the Cotswold Style

The best way to gain an understanding and appreciation of the Cotswold Style is to visit local towns, villages and farmsteads, and take time to look at the street scenes and buildings.

The Role of Modern Architecture

It is not easy to introduce modern architecture into near perfect historic townscapes. The temptation is to imitate past styles, often rather poorly and sometimes without applying the craftsmanship of the past. This has often led to a rather bland, twentieth century version of the Cotswold style.

Previous generations of architects and developers were able to produce buildings which have blended well into their surroundings without relying on imitation. It is the use of common materials, care in ensuring that new buildings are harmonious with older buildings and the street scene, and a high standard of workmanship that has achieved this. Development should be complementary, rather than identical to, surrounding buildings.

There will be circumstances where traditional design styles need to be followed very closely, particularly in the more formal terraces or where the character of the place depends on a clear similarity of style and period, such as in estate villages.

Equally, the introduction of a modern interpretation of the Cotswold style will, in some instances, be perfectly acceptable, in fact desirable. In such cases, the essentials of scale, appropriate materials and colours, detailing and high quality workmanship, will be the key factors. In places, especially where the traditional vernacular architecture is less dominant, or would be inappropriate in relation to the function of the building, there may even be the opportunity for adventurous schemes.

The Cotswold Style is easily recognisable – steep pitched roof with ridge tiles and coping, tall chimneys, symmetrically balanced design with evenly spaced windows, large window sills of stone or wood, and detailed window surrounds of stone. There are no barge boards or eaves fascias.
The setting of any building should be carefully considered, whether in the countryside or in a built-up area. Attention should be paid to its impact on public views into, over and out of the site. Those views should not be significantly harmed, and opportunities should be taken to enhance or open-up new views. In the countryside, or on the edge of towns and villages, buildings should be located to sit comfortably in the landscape. Buildings on the skyline should be avoided.

Towns, Villages and Buildings in the Landscape

In few places in Britain has the underlying rock had such a dominant and unifying effect on the architecture of an area than in the Cotswolds. The farmsteads, hamlets, villages and towns harmonise with the landscape within which they sit. The extensive use of locally quarried oolitic limestone creates visual unity.

Large Buildings in the Countryside

Large buildings, such as new barns, workshops, silos or those on employment estates on the edge of towns and villages, can have a major impact. They should be designed to be as inconspicuous as possible, with a low profile, shallow pitched roofs and finished or clad in dark, subdued colours, typically grey, dark green or brown. They should not be on the skyline but, wherever possible, located in shallow depressions or carefully positioned to fit in with the landform. Extensive landscaping, for example a wide tree shelter belt rather than a few specimen trees, will normally be required.

Industrial Estates

Industrial Estates

As much care should be taken with the design and layout of industrial estates as with residential or other forms of development.

Ample space should be allowed for landscaping. Outdoor storage areas should be well screened by walls or close-boarded fences. Chain-link security fences should not be used in the visible areas, but if unavoidable for security reasons, they should be softened or screened by planting.

Where industrial or commercial buildings are located adjacent to open countryside, and particularly where they are likely to be very visible from nearby roads, especially on the approaches to a town or village, then especially high standards of design will be required. Standard industrial sheds in bland materials and garish colours will rarely be acceptable in such locations, but there is plenty of scope for adventurous modern architecture of very high standard and which harmonises with the landscape around.

A development site in Down Ampney is shown above. New buildings have been positioned to keep the meadow, which is an important, pleasant break in the existing village street. This creates a new open space and, importantly, protects views towards the church spire. More information about the layout and design of this site can be found in the Down Ampney Village Design Statement.
HARMONY AND STREET SCENE

New buildings should be in harmony with others around them. They can add interest and variety, but should not be out-of-keeping. They should not 'clash' visually with neighbouring buildings. Where buildings are arranged in gentle curves, irregular building lines, or sit on or close to the rear of the footpath, these local characteristics should be emulated in new development. New roofs should fit in with the roofscape of the area. Dormers which break up an unrelieved roof plane, where this is important to the character of a building, or rooflights which would spoil an unbroken vista of roofs, will not be permitted.

Buildings in a Group

Cotswold streets contain buildings of a variety of architectural styles and scales, frequently ranging from one to four storeys. The relationship of one to another creates a sense of rhythm, balance and good neighbourliness that must be continued in new buildings. Many Cotswold towns and villages have an intricate but irregular pattern of roofs at angles to one another and at different heights, punctuated by chimneys and parapets. Carefully positioned buildings can help to create a sense of enclosure and completeness in the street scene.

Boundary Treatments

Boundary treatments play an important role in settling a new building into an existing street scene. Traditional Cotswold boundaries include stone walls, railings, and beech or other traditional species hedges, either alone or in combination. Modern treated timber fences, concrete block walls or hedges of Leyland Cypress can mar the appearance of a well designed building and the setting of its neighbours.
PROPORTION

New buildings should be well proportioned and relate to the human scale. All extensions should be in scale and character with the building to which they are added. Elevations should be in proportion with one another and with the surrounding buildings. Excessive bulk should be avoided. The size, spacing and location of openings should be in proportion and related to the function of the building, and harmonious with its architectural style. Shopfronts should reflect the character and architectural style of the upper floors and the distinction between separate buildings. They should also be constructed of materials and finished in colours appropriate to the building, and be well-proportioned.

Buildings that Look ‘Right’

The characteristic proportions of Cotswold buildings are the result of the disciplines imposed by past technologies, such as the length of a beam, or the height of a stone wall. The steeply-pitched gables are a product of the best use of stone slates, and the need for attic space for storage or workshops. Although many of these restrictions have been overcome by modern technology, new buildings should still be well proportioned, in the Cotswold spirit.

The size, type and spacing of windows and doors is important. A haphazard, almost random, series of openings usually produces an undistinguished building, even if the idea was to create variety. On close inspection, a Cotswold building has a true rationale behind its form and the location of openings.

Extensions

All extensions should be in scale and character with the building to which they are added. It may be possible to add a well designed extension in a modern style to an old or traditional building, so long as the extension respects the character of the existing building and does not diminish its quality and integrity.

Shopfronts

The design of shopfronts has a major impact on the appearance of town centre streets. Good shopfront design can greatly enhance the pleasure of shopping and strengthen the District’s appeal to visitors.

Either modern or traditional shopfronts can be appropriate, but the overriding considerations are that they should reflect the character and architectural style of the upper floors of the building, maintain the distinction between separate buildings in a terrace, be constructed of appropriate materials, finished in a colour which is right for the building, and be well-proportioned and well-detailed in themselves.

The Council has adopted the English Historic Towns Forum guide to shop front design. This is full of good advice (see Further Reading).

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The Council has adopted the English Historic Towns Forum guide to shop front design. This is full of good advice (see Further Reading).
SIMPLICITY, DETAIL AND DECORATION

As a general principle, the design of new buildings should be simple, avoiding over-fussy detailing. Within this principle, opportunities should be taken to add interesting details, ornamentation and expressions of local craftsmanship. The nature and colour of external woodwork, cladding and rainwater goods, should harmonise or successfully contrast with the colour of the walling materials. Large new buildings on the edge of towns or villages, or in the open countryside, should be finished or clad in subdued, usually dark, colours.

Simplicity

Simple, understated design is not only more fitting in many Cotswold locations, it is also sometimes cheaper.

Simple, solid-looking porches, designed as part of the building, usually look much better than insubstantial, over-fussy canopies, added as an after-thought.

In many traditional Cotswold buildings, a simple expanse of well laid and pointed stonework may act as a 'foil' to more elaborate detail elsewhere on the building. Within reason, plain elevations of this kind can give a building quiet distinction, while detail may be reserved for the most telling location, such as over an entrance.

Detail

There is scope for variety. There are rarely two identical cottages or houses alongside each other, except in the more formal estate villages. It is the variety of finish, random rubble walling, ashlar, the detail of occasional decoration, window styles, porches, gables, dormers, and subtle variations of eaves line and roof pitch, that creates the ever-changing picture of the typical Cotswold village, brought together by the unifying colour and texture of the local stone.

Decoration and Public Art

Within the general principle of simplicity, there is an opportunity to add interesting details, ornamentation and expression of local craftsmanship. This may be in the detailing of a window, a sundial, moulding, a door case, a finial or some other feature. Such details should rely on the qualities of Cotswold stone and other local building materials, and could re-interpret past traditions. There is plenty of scope for incorporating public art, especially on new commercial and public buildings, or in their grounds.

Colour

Cotswold stone has subtle, gentle colours. The use of colour on the building, or neighbouring buildings, needs to be handled with particular care. Less sensitive colours should be avoided, particularly the use of inappropriately coloured, stained timber.

A guide to paint colours which can look fitting against Cotswold stone is given at the back of this booklet.
MATERIALS

New buildings should be constructed of materials typical of, and used in similar proportions to, those traditionally used in the immediate surroundings. Special care should be taken in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Special Landscape Areas, and Conservation Areas, and for development which affects the appearance, character or setting of a listed building. In such cases, natural Cotswold stone, other traditional Cotswold materials and finishes, or very high quality modern substitutes only should be used.

Cotswold Stone

Most Cotswold stone is comparatively soft when first extracted. It is easily cut and dressed, but hardens as it weathers.

The colour of the stone varies greatly, chiefly as a result of its iron oxide content, and weathers to soft, warm colours, touched with flecks of moss, lichen and the patina of age. It is important that the correct colour is chosen for each locality, especially when adding to, or altering, an existing stone building.

Walling stone, used in several different ways, adds to the variety within the Cotswold style. Finely-tooled ashlar work is a feature of many of the more formal, elegant houses, with rubble stonework commonly used in cottages. Cotswold coursed rubble stonework is traditionally laid in thinly bedded courses, with the detailing of joints and the choice of colours for mortar adding much to the unifying character of the material itself. Pointing to coursed rubble stonework is similar in colour to the stone itself. Ashlar stonework is normally laid in its natural bedding plain, with joints no larger than 3mm. For examples of stone colours, see the back of this booklet.

Stone Roofs

Stone slates are laid in courses, diminishing in size from the eaves to the ridge. The irregularities in the stone face meant the slates would rarely lie flat, hence the steep pitch to prevent rain driving into the gaps. The heavy weight of the stone is also better carried on a more steeply pitched roof. The weathered roofs and gables, topped by tall, strong chimneys set on the ridge line, produce a varied and interesting skyline.

Paving Surfaces

The materials and designs of surfaces around buildings are important to the overall appearance of a development. In the Cotswolds, limestone or Yorkshire flags, together with crushed limestone, are the most traditional surface treatment. If a bound surface is required, gravel finishes with a clear binder are available. Concrete block paving needs careful choice, it will only be appropriate if a suitable coloured and shaped block and traditional laying pattern are used. Blue engineering bricks can be successfully used for surfacing around agricultural and equestrian developments, and, traditionally, have also been for footways in some town centres in the District.

Other Building Materials

Rendered and lime-washed buildings make a valuable contribution to the character of many towns and villages, particularly in some of the South Cotswold towns, such as Cirencester and Tewkesbury, where it was used for decoration or to protect soft stonework.

On the Cotswold fringes, northwards towards the Vale of Evesham and southwards into the floodplain of the Thames, several settlements contain buildings constructed in brick, usually in rich warm deep red-orange colour. Used sparingly in dressings and quoins, brick can often add warmth and variety when set against Cotswold stone. There is hardly a Cotswold town or village that does not have some brick, often in replacement chimneys or later outbuildings. There are notable attractive brick buildings in Moreton-in-Marsh, Cirencester and elsewhere.

Roofing materials display even greater variety. Many steep pitched roofs would originally have been thatched, and in some villages, particularly in the North Cotswolds at Broad Campden, Ebrington and Westington, and in scattered locations throughout the South Cotswolds, thatched cottages remain. Improved communications allowed the import of dark, blue-grey Welsh slate, used to repair or replace many Cotswold stone roofs, often resulting in shallower roof pitches. Plain clay tiles, often in a soft orange colour (which may jar the eye at first but weather to blend over time), may be used where this is the local tradition. Occasionally, the more modern plain concrete tile can be acceptable, but not in the most sensitive locations.
CRAFTSMANSHIP
Building materials, particularly Cotswold stone, should be used in the traditional manner, with careful attention to its bedding or ‘grain’, the width of courses, the colour and type of pointing, the diminishing courses of stone slates and the texture and materials used in rendered finishes. The Council will normally require the construction of sample panels on-site, to be approved before building work commences, and to be kept for reference throughout the work.

A Great Tradition
The Cotswolds has a long tradition of craftsmanship in building. The skill and knowledge of generations of local builders is evident throughout the area.

It is important to lay Cotswold stone in the right manner. In its repair and alteration, our existing architectural heritage calls for many specialist skills, such as the use of lime mortar, or the laying of Cotswold stone slates in diminishing courses. Everyone involved in new buildings should strive for the highest standards of craftsmanship. The present generation should be proud to pass on buildings of its period, which will wear and age well in future.

This profile shows the construction of a dry-stone wall. Two faces of wide flat stones are carefully placed with space between them, packed with smaller stones but not too tightly, as this is a favourite hiding place for much Cotswold wildlife. Larger stones are then placed on edge along the top, forming a strong wall capable of withstanding very high winds. The sides of the wall slope inwards towards the top—the ‘batter’ giving the wall more strength.
STONE AND PAINT COLOURS

These examples illustrate the range of colours traditionally found on Cotswold buildings. Most stone colours are still available – please contact the Council for details. The paint colours are based on the Dulux range but, being BS colours, are found in most proprietary paint ranges. Limewash is mostly found in the south Cotswolds and the colours illustrated are typical. Please contact the Council for details of suppliers.

STONE

Eastleach Stone
Southrop Stone
Guiting Stone
Chipping Campden Stone

Dowdeswell Stone
Sapperton Stone

WINDOWS

Colour: Buttermilk
B5 reference: BS10C31

Colour: Hopsack
B5 reference: BS10B17

Colour: Willow
B5 reference: BS12B17

Colour: Flake Grey
B5 reference: BS10A25

DOORS AND PORCHES

Colour: Orion
B5 reference: BS16C37

Colour: Moorland
B5 reference: BS12B21

Colour: Antelope
B5 reference: BS08B21

Colour: Clive
B5 reference: BS12B25

LIMEWASH

Colour: Yellow Ochre Light

Colour: Yellow Ochre Dark

Colour: Golden Ochre

Colour: Lime White

Please note that the limitations of the four colour print process prevents totally accurate reproduction of the colours shown – please contact the suppliers for accurate colour charts.

Photographs:
Listed left to right

FRONT COVER
Arlington Row in Bibury, A typical Cotswold porch

THE CHALLENGE OF GOOD DESIGN
1. Church gate in Duntisbourne Abbots
Row of cottages in Calmsden, Duntisbourne Abbots
2. View of Arlington Row in Bibury
Northend Terrace in Chipping Campden

THE COTSWOLD STYLE
9. New house in Kingscote
Residential block at the Royal Agricultural College. New houses in Chipping Campden
4. New houses in Northleach, Pruscott School in Cirencester
Holiday homes in South Cerney

SETTING
5. Retirement home in Fairford
View of Naunton valley, View of Chedworth
6. Museum store at Northleach, Beaufort, Bath House in Moreton-in-March, Barn near Naunton, Naunton Court Equestrian Centre, Front view of Team Supernova in Stras-on-the-Wild

HARMONY AND STREET SCENE
7. High street in Fairford
Estate cottages in Cirencester Park, Group of cottages in Bledlow
8. Combination of hedging and fencing at Hidcote Batrre, Railings over a stream at Lower Slaughter, Dry-stone wall along The Fleet Way, Detail of typical dry-stone wall, Cottage sink iron railing at Chedworth, Hedge trimming in Sapperton

MATERIALS
13. Boundary wall at Chedworth
Detail of stone roof
16. The Mill at Lower Slaughter
Brick extension to a rendered house, Blue brick used as paving in Moreton-in-Marsh, Detail of stonework, Dry-stone wall and block paving

CRAFTSMANSHIP
19. Typical mortared wall, Detail of dry-stone wall. Example of stonework at Northleach, Stone cladding roof detail
20. Rendering of a country house at Kingscote, Dry-stone walling in progress

THIS PAGE
18. House in Moreton-in-Marsh, Row of houses in Lower Slaughter, Sheepfold Barn in Eastleach

BACK COVER
Duntisbourne Abbots

PROPORTION
10. Wall Space in Market Place in Cirencester, Benson Wine Merchant in Chipping Campden, Maylams in Chipping Campden. Extension to Tilly Ho barns. Three-gabled house near Aldsworth, Conservatory at Bibury Court Hotel

SIMPLICITY, DETAIL AND DECORATION
11. Drones at Naunton, Doll’s House opposite Arlington Row in Bibury, Typical Cotswold roof detail, Parsh at South Cerney, A stone window frame
12. Hadspers Estate, Cirencester House in Naunton, Water trough in Chipping Campden, Sculpture outside Cirencester Hospital

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Art Works, Cheltenham
For further advice and information contact:
The Conservation and Design Section
in the Directorate of Development and Heritage

Further Reading:

PLANNING POLICY
Gloucestershire County Structure Plan – copies available from Environment
Department, Gloucestershire County
Council, Shire Hall, Westgate Street,
Gloucester.
Cotswold District Local Plan –
copies available from Cotswold
District Council, Trinity Road,
Cirencester, Glos.

GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE
National Planning Policy Guidance
Notes have been issued on most
aspects of planning. Four are particularly
relevant to this Design Code:
PPG1 – General Policy and Principles
(expecially Annex A); PPG3 – Housing;
PPG7 – The Countryside, and
PPG15 – Planning and the Historic
Environment. Copies are available from
branches of The Stationery Office.

GUIDANCE ON PROCEDURES
Listed Buildings and Conservation
Areas – copies available FREE OF
CHARGE from Cotswold District
Council.

DETAILED DESIGN GUIDANCE
A Guide to the Conversion of Historic
Farm Buildings to Employment Use;
Down Ampney Village Design Statement;
Cotswold Stone Slate Roofing;
Traditional Casement Windows;
Traditional Dormer Windows; and,
Traditional Cotswold Chimneys –
copies available FREE OF CHARGE
from Cotswold District Council.
The Council is also preparing
Conservation Area Statements for each
of the 144 conservation areas in the
District. Please contact the Council’s
Conservation and Design Section
for details.

COTSWOLD ARCHITECTURE
Covered thoroughly in Cotswold Stone
Homes, by Michael Hill and Sally
Birch, published by Sutton Publishing.
For information on specific buildings
and settlements, the most recent
(3rd) edition of The Buildings of
England, covering Gloucestershire;
The Cotswolds, published by
Penguin Books, is the best source.

Further procedural and design guides
will be issued by the Council.