

Draft Supplementary Guidance 35

Chalet

Developments





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Introduction and scope of this guidance

This document provides guidance on the siting, design and layout of chalet developments, and will apply where the policies of the Local Development Plan (LDP) are supportive of such developments. It should be read in conjunction with Policy 44 and all other relevant LDP policies: satisfying the requirements of this guidance alone will not be sufficient for proposals to receive support from the Planning Authority. This is non-statutory supplementary guidance and will be used as a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications for chalet developments.

For the purposes of this guidance, a chalet is a building (constructed either of timber or more traditional construction materials) which is used for the purposes of providing holiday letting accommodation. Such buildings are normally sited within communal grounds, with facilities and access being shared. This guide uses the general term 'chalet' in the interests of simplicity. It is not applicable to houses for holiday letting accommodation covered by policy 44, part 2a.

The guidance is applicable to all chalet developments, including proposals for a single or small number of chalets, as well as those in association with existing houses or farms, the extension of existing chalet sites, the upgrading (by replacement) of existing chalet accommodation, and the replacement of other types of accommodation, e.g. static caravans with chalets. It also applies to proposals for larger scale holiday villages or timeshare developments.



Chalet developments are a popular form of self-catering accommodation, and there are a number of such developments within the LDP area. The aim of this guidance is to ensure that, where such developments are permitted in the future, a high standard of quality in the siting, design and layout is achieved. The main issues which this guidance addresses are:

- Siting, layout and design of chalet developments, buildings and landscaping
- Infrastructure requirements
- Occupancy restrictions, planning conditions and legal agreements

1. Siting of chalet development

The careful siting of new chalet tourist accommodation is crucial to ensure appropriate integration within the surrounding environment. Most proposals for chalet developments are usually located in the countryside, although some may be associated with existing buildings or settlements. The following guidance is intended to ensure that, by respecting local landform, patterns of vegetation, and where appropriate, groupings of existing buildings, developments appear to be in harmony with their immediate and wider surroundings.

- Developments should be accommodated in an established landscape setting where they will not be visually prominent, and should appear to be integrated into the surrounding landscape. Timber chalets will only be approved in a managed woodland setting. The siting of chalet developments should not be detrimental to the visual amenity and quality of either the landscape or the built environment; the scenic qualities of the LDP area and the rich diversity of its natural and cultural heritage are important assets, particularly in relation to tourism, which any new development must respect.
- Developments should be sited in unobtrusive locations. Only sites that are well screened from major viewpoints by existing landform and/or existing planting or



landscape features, are likely to be suitable for development. They should avoid skylines, prominent hillsides or exposed sites. Loch-side sites can be visually obtrusive and should be avoided. Views towards lochs are a significant tourism asset, and it is understandable that developers of chalet sites wish to capitalise on such views by siting chalets loch-side. However, such views can be achieved sensitively from locations other than loch-side sites.

- Siting chalet buildings against a backdrop of trees or within woodland settings can assist in achieving integration with the surrounding landscape. However, in siting developments within these settings, there is a need to ensure that the trees and vegetation which create the setting are protected. Sites which require extensive screening with new planting will not generally be appropriate. Further information can be found in the Council's Supplementary Guidance 31 'Protecting and managing trees on development sites'.
- Where chalets are to be sited adjacent to existing buildings, the orientation and positioning of the existing buildings should be respected, and the new development should maintain the existing pattern or grain of development. The amenity of both the existing and the new buildings should be given careful consideration. Sites in close proximity to listed buildings or within/adjacent to a Conservation Area will only be acceptable if development complies with relevant LDP policies. Further information can be obtained from the Council's Conservation Officers.
- In isolated locations, the reuse of vacant traditional buildings will be encouraged, and will be preferable to the development of new buildings.



2. Layout of buildings and landscaping

- Topography, orientation, views to and from a site, access/circulation and the wider landscape setting must be carefully considered when developing a layout. Planning applications should clearly demonstrate how these issues have been addressed. A landscape and visual impact assessment will generally be required for a development of 10 or more chalet units.
- The layout of chalets should respect the topography of the site, and where possible, development should be kept away from slopes. Steeply sloping sites will only be considered if development can be accommodated without the use of heavily engineered platforms or visually prominent cantilevers/under-building. Where very minor changes in level are to be accommodated, the preference will be for cutting into slopes rather than creating platforms for building. Detailed levels and site sections must be submitted for proposals on sloping sites.
- Perimeter-boundary treatments should assist in integrating chalet developments with the surrounding landscape. However, it may not always be necessary to mark the perimeter boundary. Where boundary treatments are required, they should be characteristic of the area and should be designed to be an integral part of the development.
- Access roads and internal roads within chalet developments can affect how the development is integrated with the surrounding landscape. The immediate access to the site must be capable of safely accommodating the level of traffic generated by the development as well as emergency vehicles, service and delivery vehicles. Consultation with the Council's Roads service will be necessary at an early stage in the development of proposals. The access and internal road layout should be designed to be appropriate to the topography and setting of the development. Car parking should be located so that parked vehicles are not visually dominant. Where spaces are provided for each chalet, these should be located either to the





side or the rear of the building, and away from the main elevation, although small, well-designed communal parking areas are usually preferable.

- Hard surfacing should be kept to a minimum, and should generally be limited to access roads, footpaths and car parking areas.
- Developments in rural areas that are not associated with existing buildings should be low density and there should be sufficient separation space between buildings, which is appropriate to a rural setting, provides openness, and allows a good standard of amenity and privacy for individual chalets. The site layout should be 'open plan', i.e. units should not have their own formally defined curtilage but sit within a high quality landscape, designed to provide an appropriate setting and a good standard of amenity and privacy for individual units. Regimented, formal and suburban layouts should always be avoided in rural or edge of settlement areas and even within settlements such a layout would only be appropriate in response to an established pattern of development.
- Where new units are to be located adjacent to existing groups of buildings, the density and layout should respect that of the existing grouping.
- Hard and soft landscape and must be of a high quality and well maintained. In preparing landscape proposals, specialist advice from a Landscape Architect may be required, especially for large proposals, or those in a sensitive area.
- Landscaping should assist in the integration of the development within the landscape. It will be appropriate to have the site screened by existing vegetation rather than extensively screen sites with new planting. A high standard of landscaping will be required within the site, which will enhance the setting of the chalets, and existing trees should be retained where appropriate. Soft landscaping should focus on native species, and take into account the cover to be provided throughout the seasons, and also the species and cover adjacent to the site. The



use of fast growing conifers, such as Cupresses is not acceptable. Landscaping will be required to be designed as an integral part of the overall development, and developers will be required to submit a scheme of landscaping as part of the planning application. It must be evident that the maintenance of the external areas and all planting has been properly considered and schedules of work will normally be required.

- If there are established trees on or immediately adjacent to the site, a professional tree survey can assist in identifying trees in poor condition for removal, high amenity trees for retention and off-setting distances to protect their roots. Wherever possible, existing trees/vegetation, and other attractive landscape features should be integrated into the development. Retained vegetation will require to be protected during construction. A tree survey must accompany applications for certain sites such as wooded settings, areas covered by a Tree Preservation Order, and Conservation Areas.
- Boundary treatments and enclosure within a site should relate to the site characteristics and location. For example, stock-proof fencing with hedging may be acceptable in a rural area whilst stone walling may be more appropriate within a Conservation Area. Timber fencing can be appropriate in some circumstances, but not ranch-type fencing. Combinations of fencing or walling and tree/shrub planting may often be appropriate. Inappropriate boundary treatments include walls constructed of concrete, some artificial stones, and fast growing conifers, such as Cupressus.
- Exterior lighting on chalet buildings should be kept to a minimum, and should be designed in such a way as to minimise light pollution e.g. lighting located under the eaves of buildings, and directed towards where it is needed for security and safety purposes. Lighting of roads and footpaths will often not be required within chalet developments. Sufficient illumination will often be given from exterior lighting on the buildings. Where additional lighting is required, it should be kept to a minimum and also be designed in such a way as to minimise light pollution. Lighting should



be kept at a low level and not erected on high free standing columns, and should be directed only to where it is required.

- The overall layout of a development should include informal open areas that provide space for informal recreation.
- Drainage and other service requirements need to be carefully considered and routed in order that they do not damage retained features such as trees, hedges or stone walls. If 'sustainable urban drainage' (SuDS) provisions need to be made, e.g. swales, detention ponds or reed beds, they should be carefully designed and integrated into the overall layout and landscape of the development.
- Energy efficiency is considered a high priority and units should be oriented to maximise solar gain and also provide shelter.

3. Design of chalet developments

- All chalets should be designed and constructed to a high standard. Many chalets are often imported from Scandinavia or North America, and are therefore of a design that is not traditionally Scottish. The materials and colours and the form and proportion of such buildings do not tend to reflect traditional rural Scottish architecture. The aim of this design guidance is therefore to encourage high-quality chalet designs which reflect appropriate elements of traditional Scottish architecture, and fit into the rural Scottish context. However, the following guidance should not be read as precluding all innovative or contemporary designs; where proposals come forward for high-quality, innovatively designed chalets in appropriate locations, these will be assessed on their merits. This will also apply to chalets which incorporate the use of sustainable materials, and are designed to maximise energy efficiency. This guidance is applicable to all buildings within a development, including any ancillary buildings, such as the reception building, and all communal facilities.



- Where 10 or more units are proposed, the use of a range of unit types and sizes will be necessary.
- ‘A’ frame-style chalet design will be discouraged. This represents the most inappropriate design in terms of the form of the building, characterised by steep pitched roofs which start from the ground floor level and dominate the building. These chalets are often large in size and their scale and form is often difficult to integrate satisfactorily into the landscape, even within woodland. Consequently ‘A’ frame chalets will not be acceptable in sensitive locations.
- As the design of chalets should reflect unique site characteristics, the use of ‘kit’ chalets, which allow no adaptation to the form or external cladding, are discouraged. As noted above, timber chalets will only be considered appropriate within a managed woodland setting, where established tree cover can provide a suitable setting for the buildings. Development located within or close to an existing building group should be of appropriate traditional construction, respecting the form and layout of existing buildings or townscape.
- Some chalet type accommodation is designed using mainstream building materials, resulting in more permanent structures, which often resemble modern bungalows. Such designs are inappropriate. Where chalets are designed using traditional Scottish building materials, such as stone, render and slate, these may be appropriate and encouraged in certain circumstances. This type of accommodation would generally be more suitable in locations directly adjacent to or within other groups of buildings, which themselves reflect traditional Scottish architecture, and are of good quality. Such proposals will particularly be supported where they re-use existing vacant traditional buildings. Any new buildings should be of a style and scale, and use materials that are in keeping with the existing buildings, which will assist in integrating the new buildings into the landscape.





- Proposals for new stone chalet buildings in free-standing locations in the countryside will not generally be encouraged. Stone built self-catering buildings are more solid, permanent structures than timber chalets, and particularly if proposed in large numbers would have an undesirable impact. Visually, this type of chalet accommodation is a less distinct form, and is more likely to be perceived, and over time come under pressure to be used, as mainstream housing. In free standing locations, these types of buildings, in large numbers, will have a significant physical presence, and are likely to introduce an urban/suburban form into the countryside resembling a small housing estate.
- Chalet buildings can vary in terms of their scale, and it is recognised that there is a need to provide a range in the size of accommodation. However, the height of buildings should be restricted to single storey, except in special circumstances, where 1½ storeys may be acceptable, depending on the site context and characteristics.
- The roof pitch of traditional domestic architecture in Scotland ranges from 40 to 45 degrees. The variety of form in chalet designs results in a wide range of roof pitches. Some single storey chalets have very low pitched roofs, whereas 'A' frame types have very steep pitches. Chalets should be designed with roof pitches closer to the 40 to 45 degree range of traditional buildings, although it is anticipated that single storey chalets are likely to have a lower roof pitch than 1 ½ storey buildings.
- Windows in traditional Scottish buildings are small and have a vertical emphasis to their proportions, and this style should be reflected in chalet design. Windows should have a vertical emphasis, and the subdivision of windows should serve to reinforce this. Windows with multiple panes are generally more appropriate than single panes. Patio doors are a common feature in the design of chalets and are not precluded by this guidance. The proportion of wall to glazed space should be high, and a large proportion of glazing on a single elevation would not normally be appropriate, for reasons of design, and the potential to cause light pollution. Where the roof space is



required for accommodation, the preference is for the use of roof lights. However these should also have a vertical emphasis, should not take up large proportions of the roof space, and should be of a design which minimises projection above the roof surface. Dormers are features of traditional domestic architecture and may be appropriate in chalet designs which closely resemble traditional buildings, but will not necessarily be appropriate for all chalets. Dormers may raise issues of privacy and overlooking, and in general may look incongruous with the scale and nature of chalet buildings.

- Patios, verandahs and balconies are features common to many chalet designs. These should generally be accommodated within the main form of the building. Projecting verandahs/balconies, particularly above ground floor level, can appear incongruous with the building form.
- Materials and colours should, where possible, be obtained from a sustainable source.
- Roofing materials should be non-reflective, have a matt finish and be a darker colour than the walls. Suitable roof materials include slates, slim tiles, shingles, or finely profiled metal sheeting.
- Materials for walls should be kept simple, avoiding intricate detailing and contrasting materials.
- For developments within or adjacent to existing traditional buildings, appropriate traditional building materials should be used e.g. stone, render and slate. For developments within or adjacent to existing non-traditional buildings, the palette of materials may be more varied but should still complement the existing grouping.



- For timber chalets, rectangular logs or close boarding provide a more appropriate texture and profile of finish and are preferable to round logs which often result in heavy detailing at corners. Imitation timber material is not acceptable, either in terms of aesthetics or how it is produced. Wood stains are commonly used for finishing, but the colour(s) selected should be appropriate to the setting. Orange, reddish or yellowish stains are rarely appropriate and should be avoided, as they can appear garish and make buildings visually prominent. Mid to darker browns are more appropriate, and will assist in integrating buildings into the landscape.
- The needs of disabled people must be taken into consideration in the design of chalet developments, and developers will be encouraged to provide units which are designed to be accessible to a range of disabled people, including wheelchair users.





4. Infrastructure requirements

Developers will be required to demonstrate that proposed chalet developments can be suitably accessed and serviced. The immediate access to the site should be on a road of adoptable standard which is capable of accommodating, in safety, the level of traffic which will be generated. Adequate water supply, drainage and sewage disposal facilities must be provided.

5. Occupancy restrictions, planning conditions and legal agreements

Developments designed and approved as self-catering holiday accommodation can only be used as such. There have however been instances where chalets have been sold as private second holiday homes. This has the effect of removing the building from the use for which it was originally intended, and can result in buildings being vacant for long periods and taking on a more residential character. There also continues to be pressure in some areas to use chalets for permanent residential occupation.

These pressures will be resisted and conditions will be imposed on any planning permission to deter the use of chalets for permanent residential accommodation. They must not be used for permanent residential occupation and must be vacant for a minimum period of one month each year, to allow for refurbishment and maintenance and to ensure that there is not continuous occupation. Restrictions may also be placed on the maximum period of let or occupation of units within a development in a calendar year to the same individual or any individual within a group of people.

Section 75 legal agreements are normally considered necessary to ensure that occupancy restrictions are properly enforced. The need for an agreement should be identified during the processing of the application and the assessment of the particular proposal.



Further Information

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