

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Interim Committee

Supplementary Guidance for Chalet Developments

Introduction

This guidance sets out good practice in the siting and design of new chalet developments, and is complementary to the policies of Argyll and Bute, West Dunbartonshire, and Stirling Councils' development plans. Proposals for chalet developments are currently assessed against the policies of these development plans, which will continue to guide the location. This guidance will only apply where the policies of the development plans support new chalet development.

Chalet developments are a popular form of self catering accommodation, and there are a number of such developments within the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs area. The aim of this guidance is to ensure that, where local plan policies permit such developments, that a high quality in the design, siting and layout is achieved. This guidance will operate within the area of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Interim Committee*, prior to the preparation of National Park policy, and will set the standard for the future National Park.

The broad aims of the National Park will be the conservation and enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage, the promotion of the sustainable use of natural resources of the area, the promotion of understanding and enjoyment of the area (including recreation), and the promotion of the sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities. The promotion of high quality developments in appropriate locations is compatible with these aims.

In providing self catering accommodation, the preference is for conversion of redundant vernacular buildings. However, where new development is appropriate, this guidance represents the standards and approach which the Interim Committee expects developers to follow in the preparation of proposals for new chalet accommodation. The guidance will also be used by the local authority planning officers in the assessment of planning applications.

The main elements which this guidance addresses are:

- **Siting of Chalet Developments**
- **Design of Chalet Developments**
- **Infrastructure Requirements**
- **Occupancy Restrictions**
- **Planning Conditions**

* Stirling Council will apply the guidance across the whole of the Stirling Council Area.

Definition

For the purposes of this guidance, a chalet is a building (constructed either of timber or more traditional construction materials), or a static caravan (whose walls are not substantially of sheet metal), which is constructed / manufactured and used for the purposes of providing holiday letting accommodation. Such buildings or caravans are normally sited within communal grounds, with facilities and access being shared. This guide often uses the general term 'chalet' in the interests of simplicity.

Policy Background

The Interim Committee is a joint committee of Argyll and Bute, Stirling and West Dunbartonshire Councils, and the area is covered by the development plans of these constituent authorities.

Proposals for chalet developments are currently assessed against various Structure and Local Plan policies, and where relevant the policies of the Loch Lomond Local (Subject) Plan relating to general tourist developments, rural development and protection of the landscape and countryside. These policies will continue to guide the location of chalet developments, until such time as National Park policy is developed. However, the plans do not contain any specific policies relating to the siting and design of chalet developments, and this guidance aims to supplement the policies of the three Council's development plans.

Proposals for Chalet Development

Proposals for chalet developments in the area have ranged in scale from a single or a small number of chalets associated with existing houses or farms, to larger scale free standing developments. Other areas have seen proposals for even larger scale holiday villages or timeshare developments. This guidance is applicable to all chalet developments, including proposals for the extension of existing chalet sites, the upgrading (by replacement) of existing chalet accommodation, and the replacement of other types of accommodation, eg. static caravans with chalets.

Siting of Chalet Developments

Most proposals for chalet developments are located in the countryside, although some are associated with existing buildings or settlements. The following guidance is intended to ensure that, by respecting local landform, pattern of vegetation, and where appropriate groupings of existing buildings, developments are in harmony with their immediate and wider surroundings, whether these are rural settings or associated with other groups of buildings.

- **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 Loch Lomond and the Trossachs area, and the rich diversity of its natural and cultural heritage are important assets, which any new development must respect.
- **Developments should be compatible with neighbouring land uses.**
- **Developments should be sited in unobtrusive locations,** and should avoid skylines, prominent hillsides or exposed sites. Lochside sites can also be obtrusive, and local plans direct development away from these locations, where appropriate. Views towards Lochs are considered to be an asset, from a tourism point of view, however, such views can be achieved sensitively from locations other than loch side sites.
- **Developments should be sited in such a way as to be integrated into the surrounding landscape.**
 - 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.
 - The layout of chalets should respect the topography of the site.
 - Where chalets are to be developed 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.
 - Perimeter boundary treatments should also assist in integrating chalet developments with the surrounding landscape. It may not always be necessary to mark the perimeter boundary. Where boundary treatments are necessary, they should be characteristic of the particular area and should be included as an integral part of the development. See design criteria for details of appropriate boundary treatment.
 - Entrance roads and roadways within chalet developments can affect how the development is integrated with the surrounding landscape. See design criteria for detailed guidance.

Design of Chalet Developments

Many chalet types are of a non traditional design, and are often imported from either Scandinavia or North America. The materials, colours and the form and

proportion of the 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 better reflect appropriate elements of traditional architecture, and fit better into the rural Scottish context.

The following guidance does not however preclude innovative design of chalets. Where proposals do come forward for high quality, innovatively designed chalets, in appropriate locations, these will be considered on their merits. This will include chalets which incorporate the use of sustainable materials, and are designed to maximise energy efficiency.

The following design criteria will encourage better design and integration.

Chalet Buildings

- **The 'A' frame style chalet 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, particularly in sensitive locations. In an area such as Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, which is valued for its high quality landscape, the 'A' frame chalet is not encouraged.
- **Non timber chalet buildings.** Some chalet type accommodation has been 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 materials in keeping with the existing buildings, which will assist in integrating the new buildings into the landscape. The scale of any new buildings should not dominate the existing buildings.

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 less distinct from, 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.

Exceptionally, traditional stone chalet buildings may be considered in some free standing locations if they are small in scale and number, and can be satisfactorily integrated into the landscape.

- **Scale and height of buildings.** Chalet buildings can vary in terms of their scale, and it is recognised that there is a need to provide a range of size of accommodation. However, the height of buildings should be restricted to either single or 1 ½ storeys, where the roof pitch commences at ground floor ceiling level.
- **Roof pitch.** 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.** Windows in traditional buildings are quite small and have a vertical emphasis to their proportions. Many chalet designs have large areas of glazing with a horizontal emphasis. Chalets should have a vertical emphasis to windows, and subdivision of windows should retain or reinforce this vertical emphasis. 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 solid to void space should also be considered, with the solid element being dominant. A large proportion of glazing on a single elevation would not normally be appropriate, in terms of design and the potential contribution to light pollution, although exceptions could be made in accommodating innovative design proposals.

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, but are not necessarily appropriate for chalets. Dormers may raise issues of privacy and overlooking, and in general may look incongruous with the scale of chalet buildings. However they may be appropriate in chalet designs which more closely resemble traditional buildings.

- **Terraces and Verandahs.** These are features common to many chalet designs. These should generally be accommodated within the main form of the building, which would provide the additional benefits

of shelter. Projecting verandahs, particularly above ground floor level, can appear incongruous with the building form. However, consideration will be given to terraces and verandahs which project out from the building at ground floor level, providing that these are of an appropriate scale and design.

○ **Material and Colours.**

- The preference will be, as far as possible, for materials to be obtained from a sustainable source.
- Most chalets are constructed using timber as the main material. This timber can come in a variety of forms, from round and rectangular logs to close boarded timber. The rectangular logs and close boarded timber provide a more appropriate texture and profile of finish, whereas the use of round logs often results in heavy detailing at the corners of the building which is considered to be less appropriate. Imitation timber material is not acceptable, either in terms of aesthetics or how it is produced.
- The use of materials for walls should be kept simple, and it will not be fitting to use a mix of contrasting materials, or to introduce intricate detailing.
- Some chalet type accommodation has been designed using traditional Scottish materials of stone, render and slate, resulting in more permanent stone structures. These chalets, where encouraged, should be of materials and colour which complements the existing grouping of buildings.
- A variety of roofing materials would be appropriate, but generally should be non-reflective and have a matt finish. Reflective roofing material can result in buildings being obtrusive in the landscape. Suitable materials would include slates, tiles, shingles, or sheeting. The use of tiles should be restricted to small, slim concrete tiles in keeping with the scale of the building. Where natural or artificial slates are to be used, these should be of a similar scale. Not all sheeting material will be appropriate, but that which is matt and textured or finely profiled in finish could be considered.
- Chalet buildings made of timber are normally brown in colour, and any other colour will not be acceptable. Timber is almost always coated with wood stain, but not all shades of brown are acceptable. Orange or reddish brown, and yellowish pine can be garish and make buildings obtrusive. Mid to darker browns are more appropriate, and will assist in integrating buildings into the landscape.
- The colour of roofs should be darker than the colour of walls.

○ **Ancillary Buildings.** The guidance set out above is applicable to all buildings within a development, including any reception and communal buildings.

- **Energy Efficiency.** Chalets should be designed and constructed to a high standard, which incorporates measures to promote energy efficiency. The choice of materials can also assist in promoting energy efficiency.
- **Disabled Access.** 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.

Layout of Buildings and Landscaping

- **Layout**
 - Within a chalet development, the buildings should be laid out in a manner which respects the topography of the site, and where possible avoids building on slopes. Where very minor changes in level are to be accommodated, the preference will be for cutting into slopes rather than creating platforms for building.
 - Chalet developments, which are not associated with existing buildings, should be low density developments with 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.
 - Where chalets are to be located adjacent to existing groups of buildings, then the density and layout should respect that of the existing grouping.
 - Suburban type layouts and densities are not appropriate in free standing developments. The site layout should be “open plan”, where chalets do not have their own formally defined curtilage, but should sit within a high quality landscaped setting.
 - Where perimeter boundaries are proposed, appropriate boundary treatments would include planting of hedges or trees of native species, or natural stone walls. Timber fencing can be appropriate in some circumstances, but ranch type fencing is inappropriate. Combinations of fencing or walling and tree / shrub planting may often be appropriate. Inappropriate boundary treatment would include walls constructed of concrete, and some artificial stone (depending on the type and colour), and fast growing conifers, such as Cupressus.
 - The access road and internal road layout should be designed to be appropriate to the setting of the development. More formal hard surfacing with raised concrete kerbing can look out of place in the countryside, and less formal solutions should be sought. Formal hard surfacing may be appropriate in some cases, but without the formal raised kerbing. Developers will be required to consider the requirements of access by emergency vehicles, in designing the road layout. It is anticipated that the junction with the public road will be constructed to adoptable standards, and

developers should discuss this and the internal layout with the relevant roads authority.

- The overall layout of a development should include informal open areas, which would provide space for informal recreation.
 - Car parking should be suitably located within the development, 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. Large communal car parking areas should be avoided, although small, well sited, communal car parking areas may be appropriate in some circumstances.
- **Landscaping.** The landscaping within the site will include hard and soft landscaping, and should be of a high quality.
- The 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.
 - Hard surfacing should be kept to a minimum, and should generally be limited to access roads and footpaths and car parking. The type of surfacing will require to be appropriate to the setting, and often a less formal surface than tarmac and concrete kerbing, will be more appropriate (see siting criteria).
 - Exterior lighting on chalet buildings should be kept to a minimum, and should be designed in such a way as to minimise light pollution eg 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.

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.
- The provision of adequate water supply, drainage and sewage disposal facilities will need to meet the requirements of SEPA, building control and West and East of Scotland Water standards.

Occupancy Restrictions

Chalets are designed to be used as self catering holiday accommodation. 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. In rural locations this raises issues in relation to housing in the countryside. Any proposed change of use to permanent residential occupation may also raise issues relating to local needs occupancy. These pressures will be resisted and conditions will be imposed on any planning permission to deter the use of chalets for permanent residential accommodation.

Section 75 Agreements

Legal agreements are normally considered necessary to ensure that occupancy restrictions are properly enforced. The need for an agreement is usually identified during the processing of the application and the assessment of the particular proposal. Applicants should be aware that this will normally be requested.

Planning Conditions

Chalet proposals often raise similar matters that need to be addressed and confirmed through conditions of the planning consent. Most of the information below will have been obtained by the applicant in preparing the proposal or provided while the application is processed. The following checklist will be considered in assessing proposals for chalet developments: -

- The use of the buildings is for holiday letting purposes only and does not extend to permanent residential use.*

- The maximum period of let or occupation of buildings within the development to the same individual, or any individual within a group of people, will be restricted to a set period within a calendar year. Each Council will advise developers of the length of this period*
- The Councils may require the buildings to 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 of the chalets.*
- A schedule of materials and finishes for buildings; walls, fences or other structures; parking, access roads and footpaths; and details of external lighting.
- A scheme of landscaping including measures for the protection of existing trees to be retained and details of any engineering operations which may affect their longevity; details of tree surgery and felling operations; proposed tree and shrub planting and provision for its establishment, maintenance and reinstatement; and details of existing and proposed ground levels.
- Provision for the maintenance of the exterior of the buildings (including materials and the colour of finishes); parking and circulation surfaces; refuse and other storage; boundary treatment; and any communal facilities.

* These condition may need to be varied to reflect the different requirements of timeshare developments.

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