

Case Studies; Meitheal Clusters Applied to Villages and Rural Settlements

23.3.9 (ii) Case Studies, Meitheal Clusters applied to villages and rural settlements

The choice of five case studies, out of some 65 possible villages, is made with a view to identifying places, each with a different character. They are not selected on a geographical basis, but rather to reflect the diversity of village types in the county. Sites are chosen representing typical and appropriate sites; however, their development was a desk exercise and no account was made about ownership or the particular technical situations in the villages chosen, such as capacity of sewerage. Despite these disclaimers, they are intended to help in the approach towards sensitive development in the villages of Kildare; to avoid on the one hand the excessive scale of suburban-type development, and on the other hand the sporadic, ribbon development which threatens the compact qualities of villages.

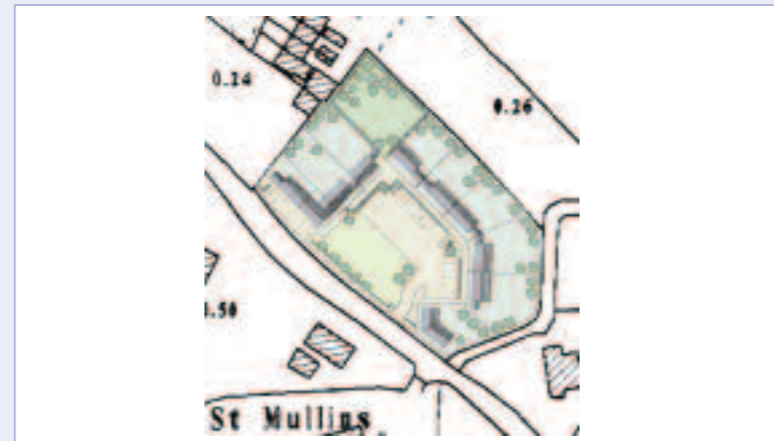
Timolin/Moone

Timolin is a tiny village, located along the old main road from Naas to Tullow. It was a monastic foundation from the seventh century. It has a public house along the main road, and a church and old mill along the village lane. The site is located along the lane beside the old mill and opposite the church, in a delightful rural village context with space for development. The scheme maintains the line of the lane with trees while also emphasising the frontage with the location of workshop/crèche units along the frontage. The houses are grouped around a small green.

Fig 22.3.11 Timolin: Village Plan with cluster site identified



Fig 22.3.12 Cluster site plan; church opposite and housing and old mill adjacent



Lane leading to old main road



Church opposite site



Fig 22.3.13 Three-dimensional view of Timolin village cluster



Converted old mill with 2 and 3-storey scale



Narraghmore

Narraghmore is a quiet rural village away from main roads and, until now, development. It has a fascinating form, based on a village centre at a junction of five roads radiating from a village square with buildings fronting onto it. The site lies between the village square and the housing estate, a terrace of semi-detached houses about 100 m from the Square. A strong hedge forms the road frontage between the village square and the housing estate. A number of workshops/crèche form a building line onto the lane establishing a visual connection between the estate and the village. Public open space on site is a combination of green and hard-surface areas, forming a focus for the site.

Fig 22.3.14 Three-dimensional view of Village cluster



Fig 22.3.15 Village Plan, showing village cluster and housing area



Fig 22.3.16 Village Cluster Plan



Village Cluster site, Narraghmore



Shop, left, and pub in village centre



Post Office in centre of village



Robertstown

Robertstown is a Grand Canal village, where the focus is on the canal, at the junction point for the canal connection to Athy and the Barrow Navigation system. The village was a package-boat stage along the canal, about 20 miles from Dublin. Despite the proximity, the village seems far away from the busy roads which lead to Dublin and it has retained the form and charm of its special vocation as a canal village. The case-study for Robertstown is intended to illustrate the potential for infill in small settlements. The sites chosen are in the centre of the village and show how small sites may be exploited to improve the old structure of the place, and to provide for local housing need. The existing derelict buildings on site are incorporated into the new scheme.

Fig 22.3.17 Three-dimensional view of infill sites at Robertstown

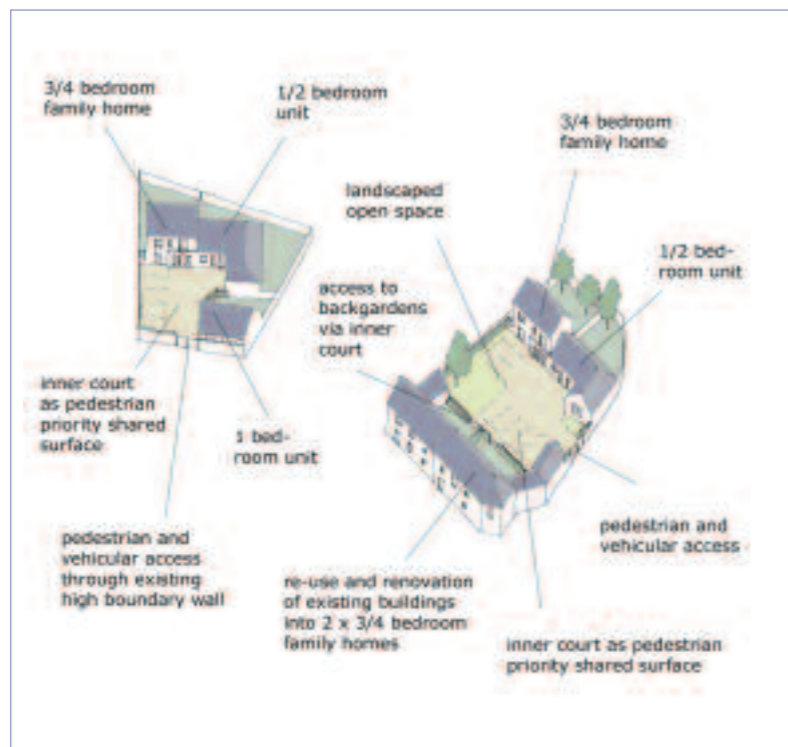


Fig 22.3.18 Robertstown - village plan and sites

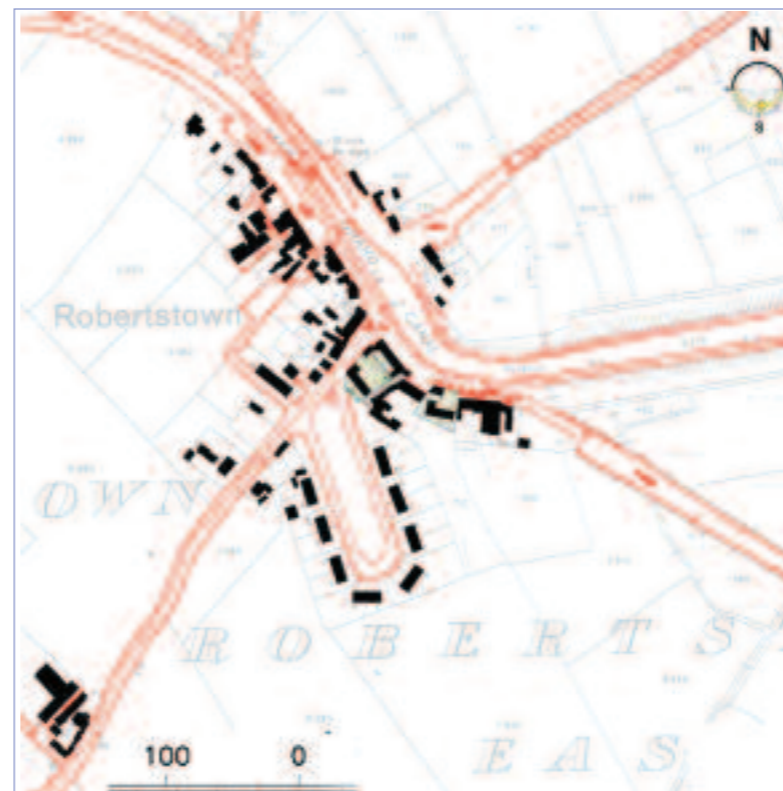


Fig 22.3.19 Robertstown - Plan of infill sites



Robertstown - canal-side from North



Robertstown - canal-side from East



Robertstown - roadside from South



Allenwood

Allenwood was a coaching post on the Edenderry road, and also a chapel village. Whilst there is some concentration of the village along the main road, the reality is of a very extended area of single houses and small holdings on the edge of the bog. The dispersal of houses is quite typical of a large area of the northwest of Kildare, where Land Commission re-location has generated a dispersed community, dotted along the lanes. In this case study, the axis of the main road presented the most favourable opportunity for a more compact solution than hitherto. The scheme shows a courtyard scheme gathered around a green. Some of the dense hedge boundary of the site is retained whilst it has been opened up to connect visually with the road and the adjacent buildings and pub.

Fig 22.3.20 Allenwood – village plan and site



Fig 22.3.21 Allenwood – village cluster plan



Fig 22.3.22 Three-dimensional view of Allenwood village cluster



(D) Design Guidelines; Single Houses for Rural Needs

22.4 Design Guidelines: Single Houses for Rural Needs

22.4.1 Introduction

This Section provides guidelines for the design of single houses for rural needs in the rural areas of County Kildare.

The emphasis in section 22.3, on the potential for using village clusters is an integral component in the reduction of the number and impact of single houses in the open countryside. It stems from the belief that clusters, if available and affordable, will be seen as an ideal way to live in the countryside, in a rural settlement, and, for many, preferable to a single house away from other households.

However, it is recognised that there will be a continuing need for some people to build new houses in rural areas.

The design guidelines embrace general principles, which are applicable according to the particularities of the site and the place and a rigorous interpretation of appropriate design.

The rural housing policy set out in Chapter 6 in Volume 1, in respect of single houses in rural areas is related firstly to the immense pressure of urban generated growth and the inexorable land and housing demands of the Dublin area and secondly, the fact that the landscape itself has a limited capacity and in some cases, no capacity to absorb building without eroding its intrinsic qualities. The purpose of these guidelines is to establish reasonable criteria, which can be applied to specific situations to lessen the visual impact of single houses in the countryside.

New house sheltered behind old hedgerows



22.4.2 Learning from the Past about Successful Patterns of Individual House Design in the Countryside

Observation of the patterns and location of successful, mainly traditional and pre-twentieth century, housing in Kildare can give a strong lead in setting out design guidelines for new dwellings.

Climate and Shelter

Traditional, classical and some modern houses in Kildare take advantage of opportunities for shelter in some or all of the following ways:

- Houses are located away from the full force of prevailing winds, sheltered where possible by the lie of the land. The plainlands offer little in the way of topographical shelter, and they, more than elsewhere, depend on shelter from planting.
- The planting of trees and hedgerows for shelter is a strong characteristic of the Kildare landscape. Hedgerows often exceed two metres in height, acting as effective visual screens as well as providing shelter. Older houses benefit greatly from the maturing of the planted landscape, which is not achieved overnight with new houses. However trees and hedges can provide effective shelter within five to seven years of planting. They can reduce the fuel consumption of a house by up to 15%, so they may be considered as being cost effective as well as creating good comfort conditions, privacy and screening. Beyond this, they are effective in softening the outlines and reducing the dominant appearance of buildings in both the local and wider context.
- Enclosing walls or hedges are used to create good microclimates around the house.
- The form of the building itself and its outbuildings are frequently used to create sheltered enclosures.

Topography carefully chosen to create a sheltered zone for the farmhouse and outbuildings



Upland farm with conifer shelter planting



High bank and hedgerow screen for traditional cottage



Buildings and the Use of Simple Building Forms

Traditional buildings in the County are predominantly modest in scale. The typical cottage is long and low, with a single room depth, which allows the house to have optimal orientation, as rooms can have daylight and sunlight on both sides of the house. Deeper plans, with different rooms front and back became common with Georgian farmhouses and Victorian villas. The roof, however, remained low as it was divided generally into two pitched roofs, one behind the other, with a central gutter.

Roof pitch varied from about 50-55 degrees when thatch was the original material to about 40-45 degrees when the roof was slated. However, present-day use of slate, concrete tiles and fibre cement slates has allowed lower pitches, down to about 25 degrees.

The impact on form of changes in depth and roof pitch has generated both bulkier buildings and roofs with flatter pitches. On their own, different forms may sit well in the countryside, but when they are produced in a row, with different frontages, and different roof pitches, the idea of coherent patterns of building in the countryside breaks down.

Thus we can learn from traditional building that their predictable form and restricted use of materials, and with a limited range of building types, helps to create a coherent response in the countryside. However there have always been exceptions to the rule, from the medieval tower houses to the remarkable Georgian Country Houses of Kildare. The appropriate response is a question of judgement in the particular circumstances, which will be dealt with in the guidelines.

The long-term visual coherence of the countryside will be greatly helped by restraint in form, a respect for dominant traditional forms if applicable in a locality, and thoughtful consideration of how the scale of a new building will fit with the existing landscape and buildings. Fig 22.4.1 below illustrates a range of typical and familiar house forms in the countryside. They are generally simple and easy to understand.

Fig 22.4.1 Typical House Forms in the countryside

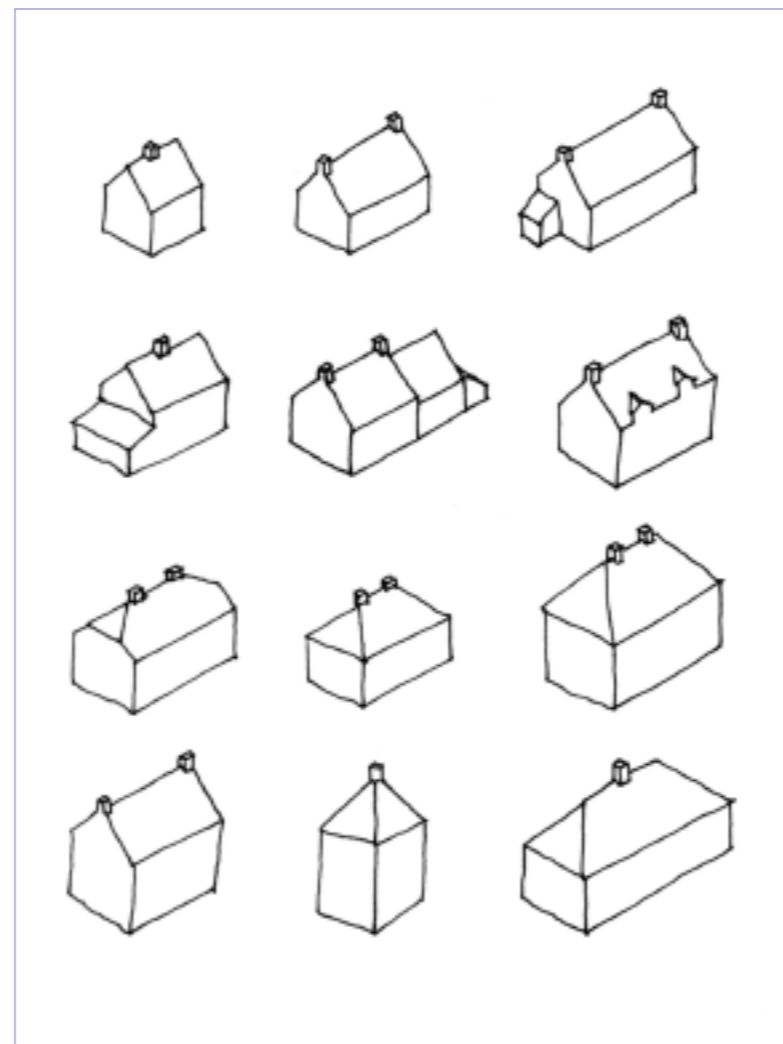


Fig 22.4.2 Development in an upland area;

