

Design in DOWN AMPNEY



A Village Design Statement prepared by Cotswold District Council
with the residents of Down Ampney, Gloucestershire



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the following for their assistance in the
preparation of this Statement:**

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Front cover: A view of Down Ampney from the old stone cross shows the elongated shape of the village, with the red brick development of Broadleaze in the distance. The colour, proportions, and roof angles of the historic village will be respected in new development.

Back cover: Above – the characteristic building line of Down Ampney is set well back from the road, allowing space for large and ornamental front gardens. Houses are not more than two storeys high and roofs steeply pitched.

Back cover: Below – limited and carefully controlled new building will be allowed at either side of the meadow which extends into the centre of the village, but development must not spoil the attractive views towards the church and conservation area in the distance.

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Successful village design demands a harmony between traditional and new building. This enhances both the appearance of the environment and community life. Future design should therefore consider the patterns and details which give Down Ampney its special character.

This Statement encourages good design by analysing the characteristic style of Down Ampney, and suggesting ways in which it might be applied to all future landscape and building activity in the village.

The Statement provides guidance to all interested parties, including: the District Council and the Parish Council, when considering planning applications; developers of new housing in the village; and home owners contemplating work to their property. A section at the end identifies environmental improvements that might be made to the village, mostly requiring relatively little work and cost.

The history, community and amenities of Down Ampney have been excellently described in A Village Appraisal published by the Parish Council in 1991. While it should be read in conjunction with the Appraisal, this Statement concentrates on the visual aspects of the traditional style and future development.

How the Statement was prepared

A well-attended Design Workshop was held in the village in November 1993, organised jointly by the District and Parish Councils. Villagers photographed and discussed the distinctive character of their village, while the school children helped by painting what they liked about it. Staff of the District Council's Planning Department also carried out a detailed study of the history and appearance of the village and its surrounding landscape.

The draft Design Statement was discussed with the Parish Council, the Co-operative Wholesale Society as the main landowner, and subsequently with villagers at a public meeting in May 1994. In July 1994 the District Council adopted the Statement as supplementary planning guidance to the statutory District Local Plan.

Down Ampney

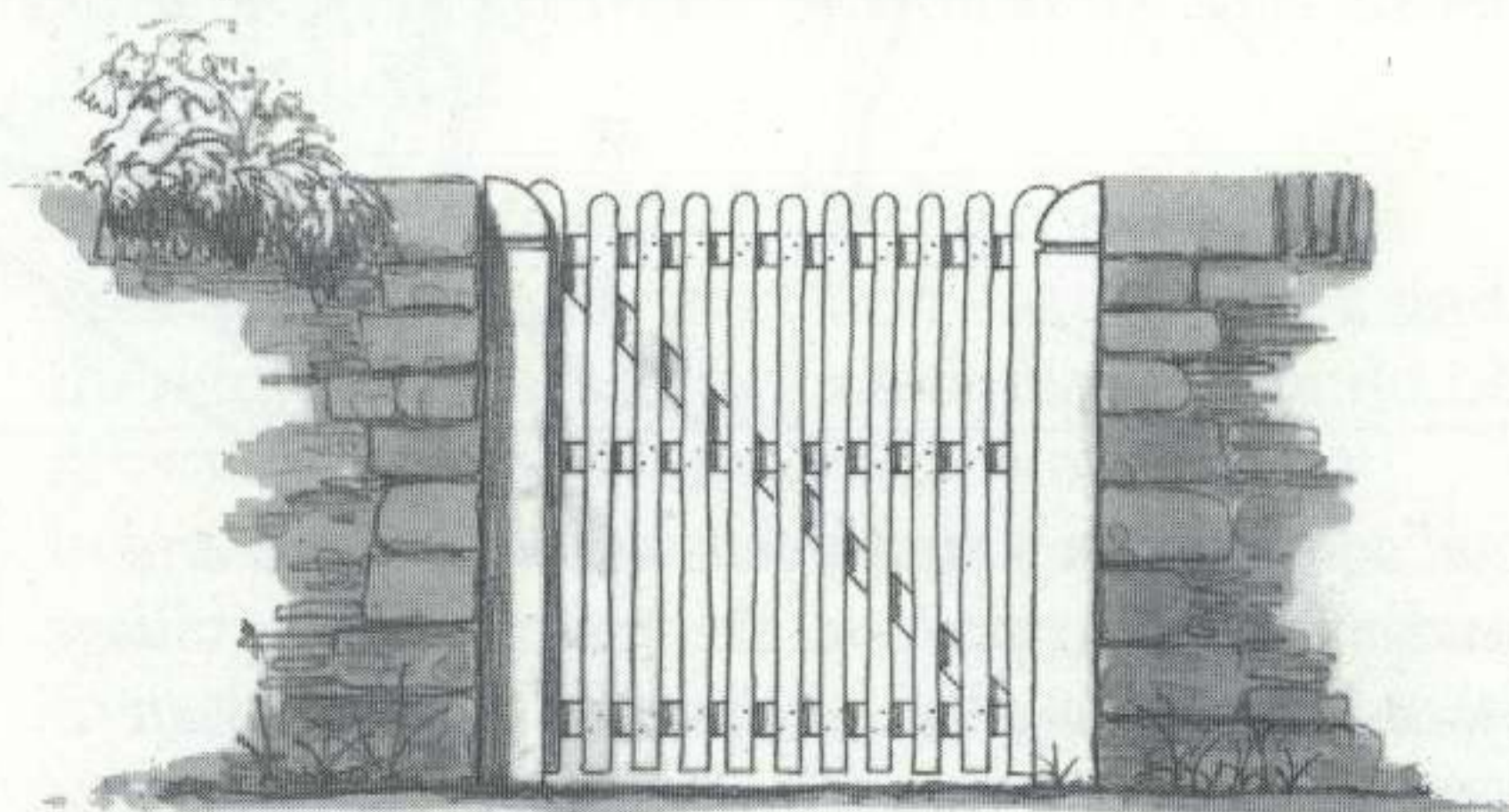
Down Ampney lies in the broad vale of the Thames in south Gloucestershire, a mile east of the busy A419 Cirencester to Swindon road and very close to the boundary with Wiltshire. Most of the village is included in a large agricultural estate, owned and intensively farmed by the Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS). It has the lively character of a working, rather than a 'picture postcard' village. Down Ampney has a diverse mixture of buildings, ranging from old farms to modern housing estates.

A brief history of the village

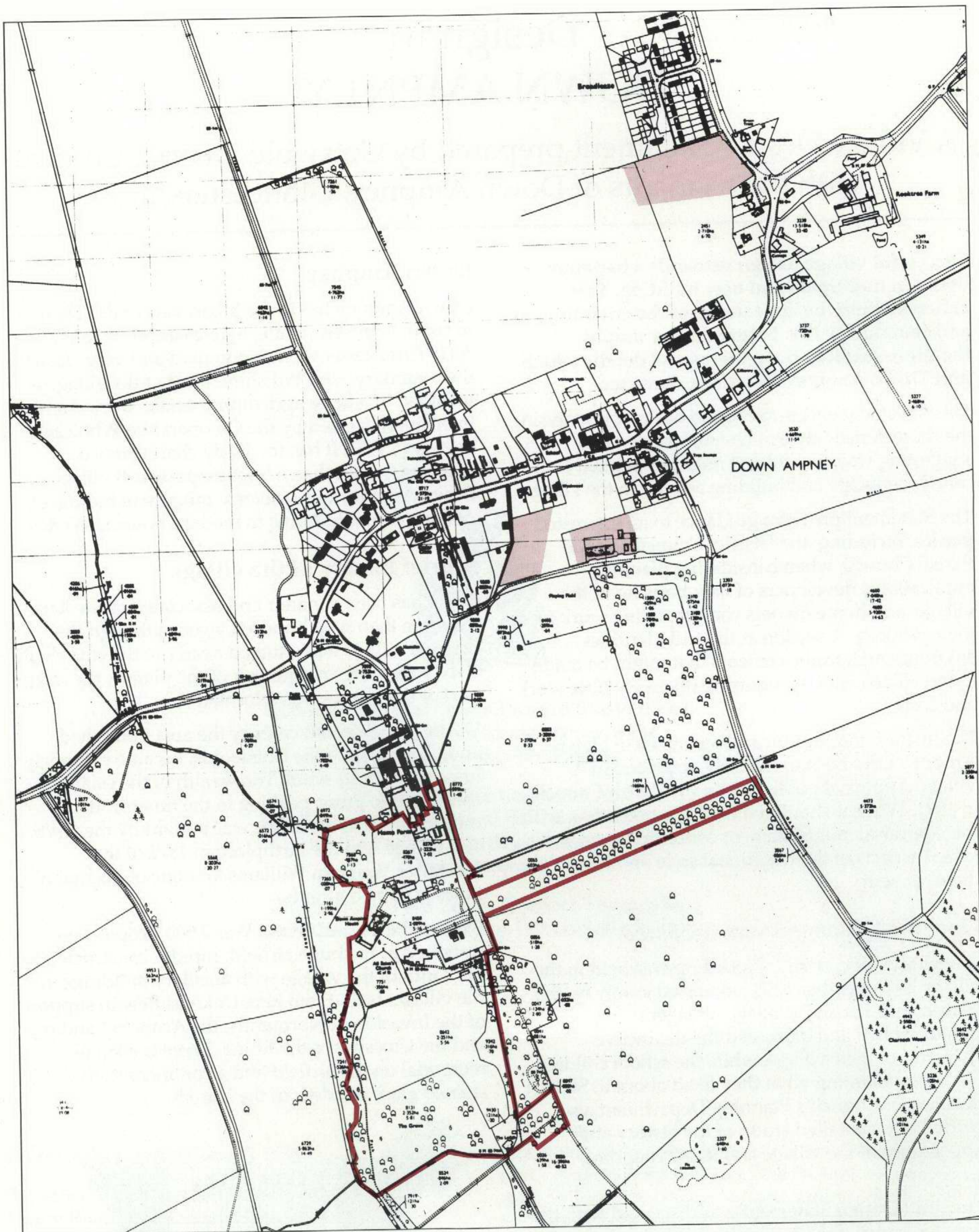
There has been a manor and associated estate here for more than nine hundred years, although the original village was situated nearer to the church. In 1349, following an outbreak of the plague, the main part of the village was relocated.

During the fifteenth century the area flourished and, like much of the Cotswolds, became extremely important for its wool. The wealth of the estate continued to grow, peaking in the nineteenth century. In 1918 the estate was bought by the CWS. The village was the birthplace in 1872 of the composer Vaughan Williams and one of his hymn tunes is named after it.

During the Second World War 2,500 people were stationed at the huge airfield, rapidly constructed to the south of the village with ancillary buildings in the village itself. From here Dakotas flew in support of the Invasion of Normandy, the Arnhem Landings and the Crossing of the Rhine. There is a small memorial on the airfield and a commemorative stained glass window in the church.



A simple wooden garden gate of Victorian design.



The village of Down Ampney follows an elongated and somewhat straggling pattern. The main part of the village, in the centre, was based on small single or paired estate cottages alongside the road. The older part of the village, towards the south, is a conservation area (outlined)

including the Church of All Saints and Down Ampney House as well as the long avenue of trees known as Sycamore Walk. The approximate extent of future development areas, in the centre of the village and adjoining the Broadleaze estate to the north, is indicated by shading.

The village in the landscape

The landscape setting of the village consists of two distinct types. To the south-west, surrounding Down Ampney House, are remnants of eighteenth-century private parkland where sycamores and Scots pines dominate the skyline. Peaceful meadows lie alongside Ampney Brook, across which there is a pleasing view of the slender spire of the Church of All Saints. The parkland trees are scattered, except for the formal avenue of Sycamore Walk.

In contrast, to the north and east of the village there is a modern arable agricultural landscape with extensive views of large, flat, open fields with few hedges and trees.

Some of the newer buildings on the edge of the village do not blend well into the surrounding countryside, insufficient attention having been paid to boundaries in the past. However, some open fields extend into the village, breaking up the lines of development - particularly the fields around Stoney Stile.

Similarly, opposite the school, a meadow used for grazing livestock is a key local feature and very important to the character of the village. It is fronted by a low stone wall and several trees, framing a view of the church spire in the distance, reinforcing the sense of community.

The pattern of building

Down Ampney is a long, narrow village, with most development located alongside the road for some three-quarters of a mile. This elongated pattern of building can cause some feelings of social division. Nevertheless there is an active local community, with the Parish Council and other village organisations bringing residents together in clubs and societies.

The village buildings may be considered in three groups. The northern part of Down Ampney is dominated by Broadleaze, a red brick Council-built housing estate, although there are a few other houses nearby.

The opposite end of the village principally comprises the conservation area, including the Church of All Saints and Down Ampney House.

The centre of the village is a mixture of historic buildings - mostly estate cottages - and modern houses. The nineteenth-century estate cottages are set well apart in spacious gardens. The primary school is also built in this harmonious 'estate' architectural style. Recent buildings between the old cottages follow the original building line, which is set back from the road. This has helped to reduce the visual impact of the new housing.

Special features

Everyone involved in preparing this Statement was asked to identify the special features that create focal points in the village or add to its character. All these features contribute to the Down Ampney style and are therefore to be maintained and considered in future development. They include:

- Numerous dry stone walls, and an old stone stile.
- The War Memorial.
- The nineteenth-century stone cross and triangular green on the western village approach.
- The red telephone box.
- Colourful and well-tended front gardens to many cottages.
- Imposing stone porches on the estate cottages.
- Brightly coloured lichens on roofs.
- The peaceful tree-lined pathway to the west of the former egg packing station.
- The meadow opposite the village school.

Down Ampney Conservation Area

The buildings of highest architectural quality in Down Ampney are situated down the lane to the south of the village. Both the Church of All Saints and Down Ampney House are medieval in origin, and listed Grade I. Together with the surrounding buildings, gardens and churchyard, their special architectural character led to their designation as a conservation area in 1991. The area includes the wooded area known as The Grove, and an avenue of trees known as Sycamore Walk facing Down Ampney House.

The Home Farm stands north of the grounds of Down Ampney House, comprising buildings of various dates including several modern agricultural structures. The farmhouse is also a listed building.

Any new buildings within the conservation area are likely to detract from its character, and therefore the only anticipated change would be alterations to the Home Farm buildings to bring them into new use. Such conversion work would have to be very carefully designed to maintain the character of the group and the surrounding landscape.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Fortunately the nineteenth-century estate architecture and the earlier parkland of Down Ampney remain largely intact. Modern development has diluted, but not destroyed, the visual character of the village. The Down Ampney style should be reinforced by well designed and carefully located new buildings, landscaping, and other improvements.

New development in the village should not attempt to replicate exactly the traditional estate style. Its design should be contemporary, in the way that each period has added to the variety of village buildings. However, new buildings must be sympathetic with the Down Ampney style.

To reflect the existing village buildings, developments of new housing should be predominantly cottage-sized, paired dwellings. Ideally they should be of one and a half storeys in height: that is, the roof line descends below the level of the first floor ceilings, so that first floor windows must be dormers. This is especially important within the centre of the village, where it will be a requirement of planning permission.

Most cottages have a gable width of around 18 feet. New development should not exceed this, as any increase in width would automatically be reflected by an increase in overall height, and hence scale, and would dominate the existing historic buildings.



Roofs

The roof lines of modern buildings are often not steep enough to blend into the traditional village setting. Roof pitches of approximately 50° are required in most locations and always in the centre of the village. Narrow gables increase the vertical emphasis of the house design and avoid the modern predominantly horizontal look.

Traditionally the main roof lines of buildings in the village are modified by outbuildings and extensions at the rear. New development should reflect this variety, although the extensions must be well designed and not all of the same pitch and size.

Hipped main roofs are not characteristic of Down Ampney and should not therefore be a feature of new buildings, but hipped dormers may be considered within an appropriate context. On the other hand, coped gables and exposed gable rafters are a distinctive feature of the traditional estate buildings in the village, and these details should be continued in new development.

*Above: A row of three Victorian estate cottages in the Down Ampney tradition. Imaginative architecture has given each cottage an individuality far removed from general perceptions of 'terraced' properties. The following details are characteristic. **Chimney stacks:** tall, robust, brick or stone with stone dressings. **Roof:** angled at 50° from the horizontal, with plain clay tiles. **Gables:** also at 50° with exposed rafter feet and purlin ends, generous eaves and verge oversails. **Dormers and porches** are assertive and varied. **Walls** are coursed rubble stone with ashlar quoins and 'planted' plinths. **Windows** are stone mullioned with slim timber casements, and one 'canted' bay window. **Doors:** in 'Gothick' style, and cast iron **rain water goods** fixed to rafter feet.*

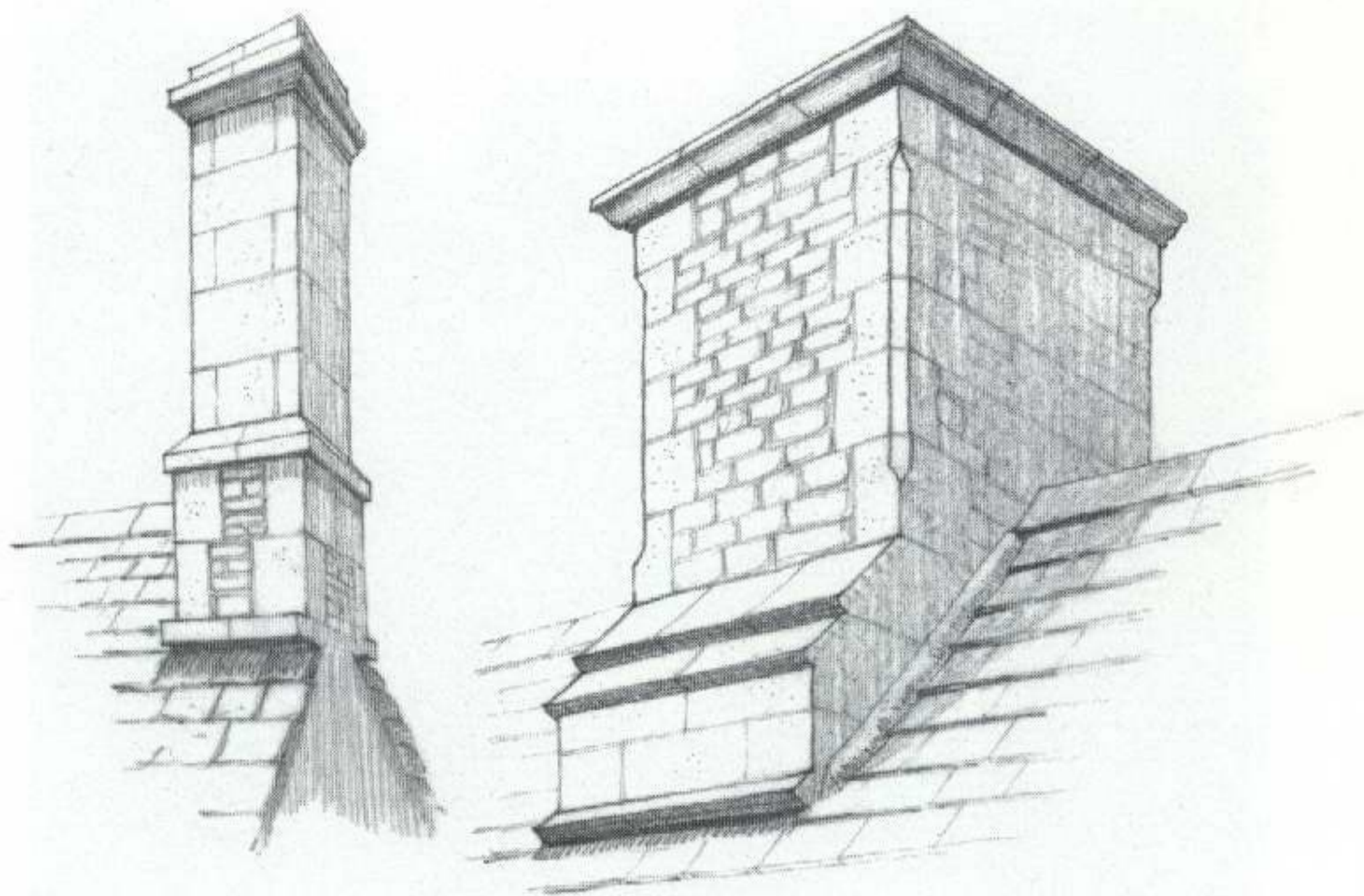
*Right: A pair of simple eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century cottages. Slender brick **chimney stacks** are set on the end of coped gables and a 50° 'graded' stone slate roof. **Windows** are simple iron casements in pegged oak frames, between oak lintels and stone cills. Strong **porches** of dressed stone with rubble infill have 'sprocket' eaves, mortared verges and plank doors.*

Chimneys

Tall, prominent chimneys, sometimes set diagonally, are notable in the village and should be widely used in new building. Although they are not always required by modern house heating systems, chimneys provide the potential for flexibility and future variation.

The position of the chimney is significant. At Down Ampney, chimneys are usually placed on the ridge in gable and party wall partitions.

Chimneys are not only visually important for the individual buildings, but also to punctuate the roofscape of the village as a whole.



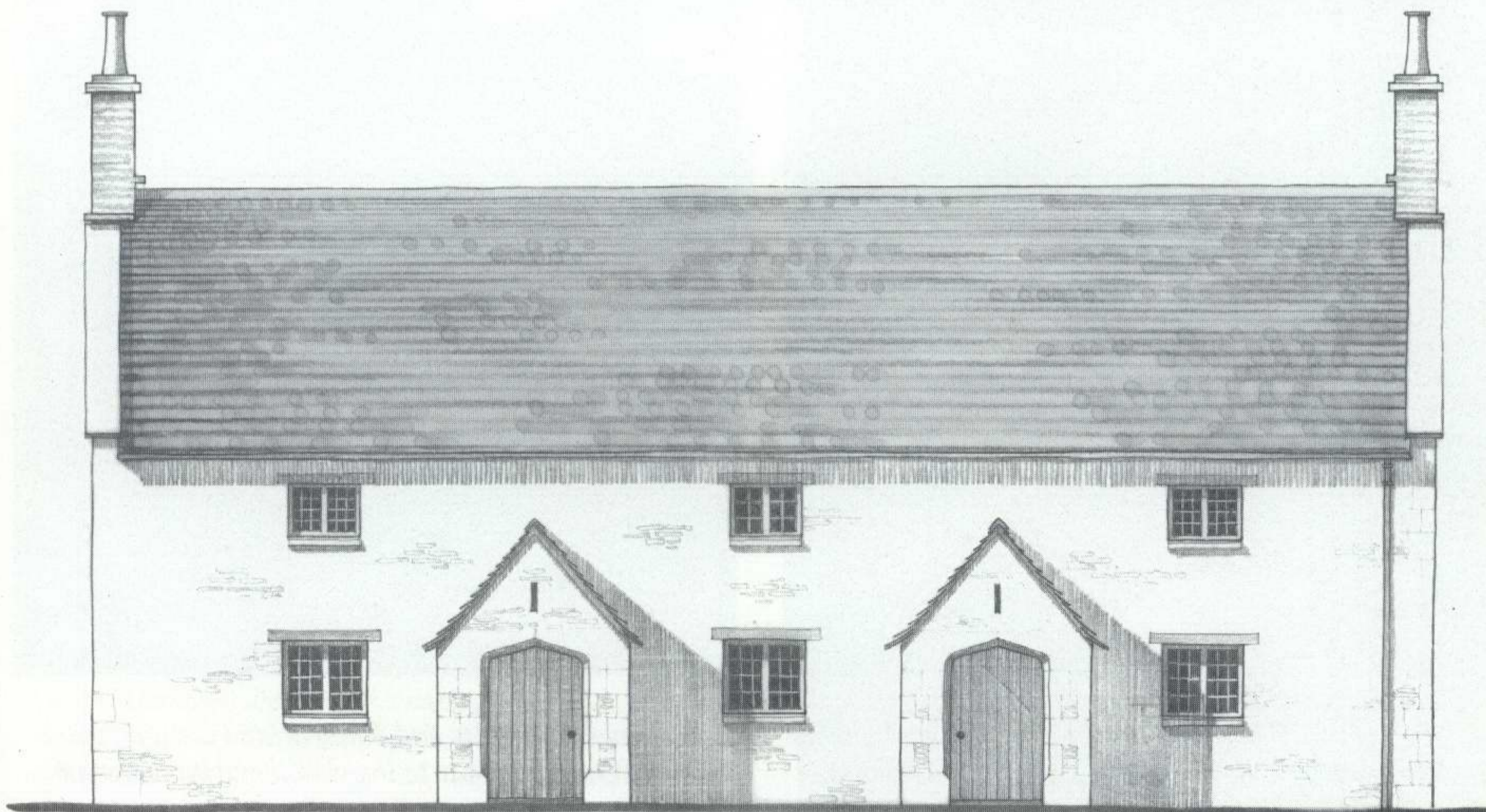
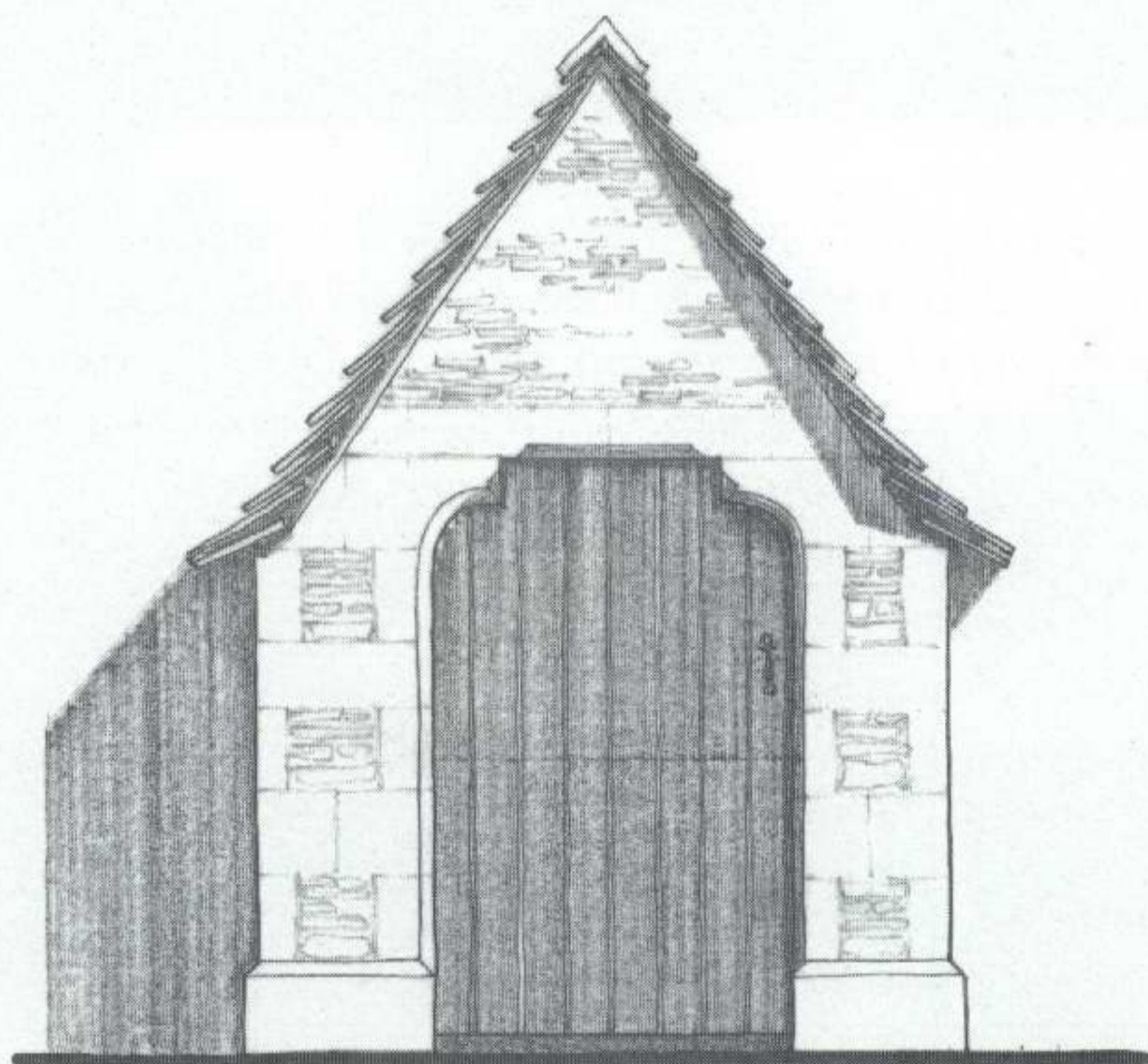
Porches

Porches are a notable feature of the estate cottages and some older buildings in Down Ampney. They are distinctively solid, designed as part of the structure of the house, rather than just a canopy which looks as if it had been tacked on.

Most porches in Down Ampney have steep gables, matching the roof pitch of the house. This effect should be perpetuated in new development wherever possible.

Above: Two of the typical Down Ampney chimney styles: a slim, gable-end one at left, and a more robust double chimney set on the roof ridge.

Right: A close-up of a Down Ampney porch, featuring a gable of 50° from the horizontal, coursed rubble stone walls and ashlar dressings.





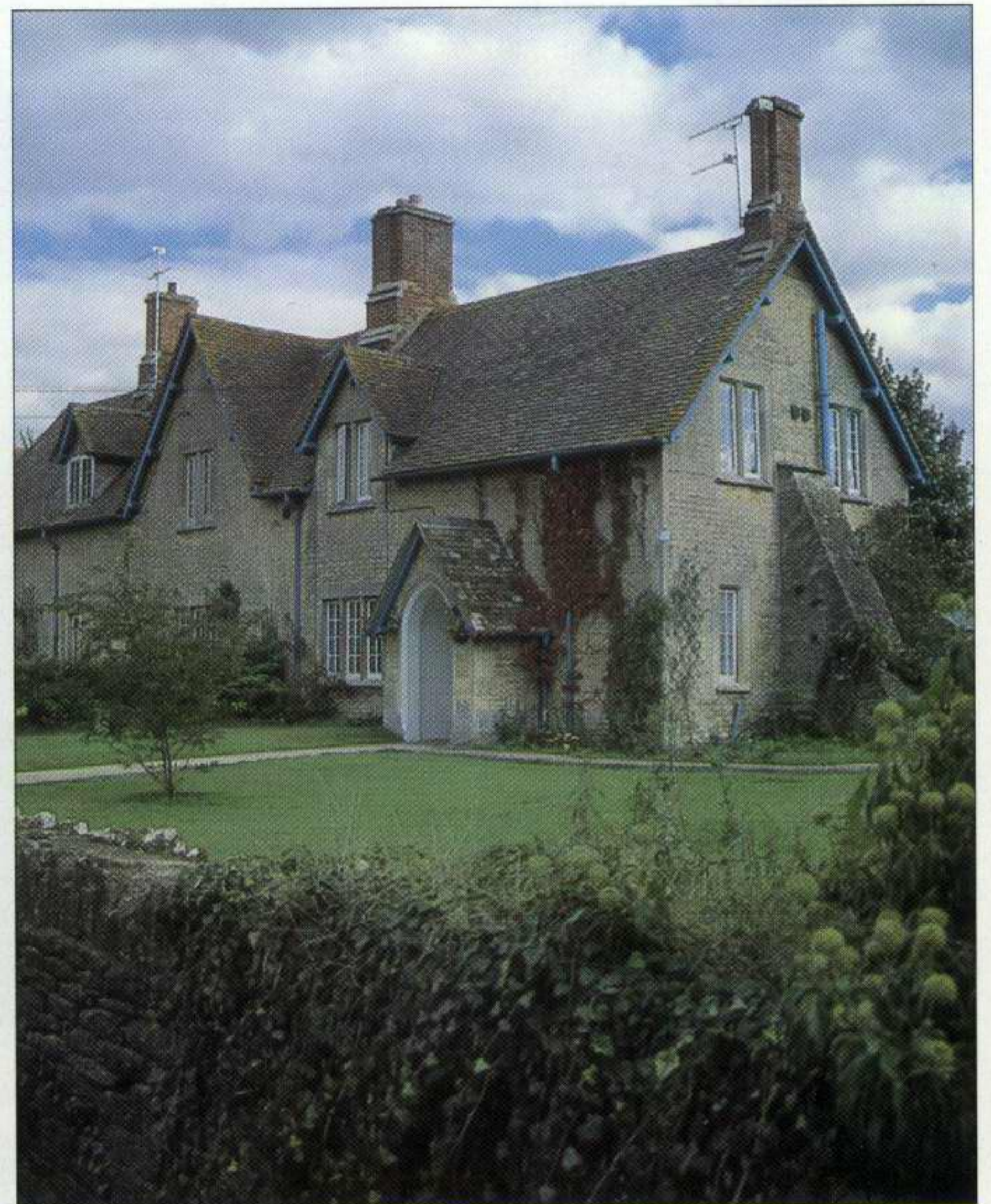
Walkers around Down Ampney enjoy the spacious views of Cotswold countryside and the associated wildlife. In the background, a farm within the village conservation area shows the typical honey-buff local stone and typical architecture, including hipped dormer windows.



The estate cottages built in the nineteenth century are a feature of the village, with their bold windows and porches, and attractive well-maintained gardens adjoining the main street. This pair of cottages is more elaborate than most.



Another typical and highly attractive estate cottage, with the visual proportions, window forms, and Cotswold stone slate roof that are to be encouraged in future building design.



A range of steep gables and dormers, and a strong porch and buttress, contribute to the traditional but adaptable style of Down Ampney cottages.



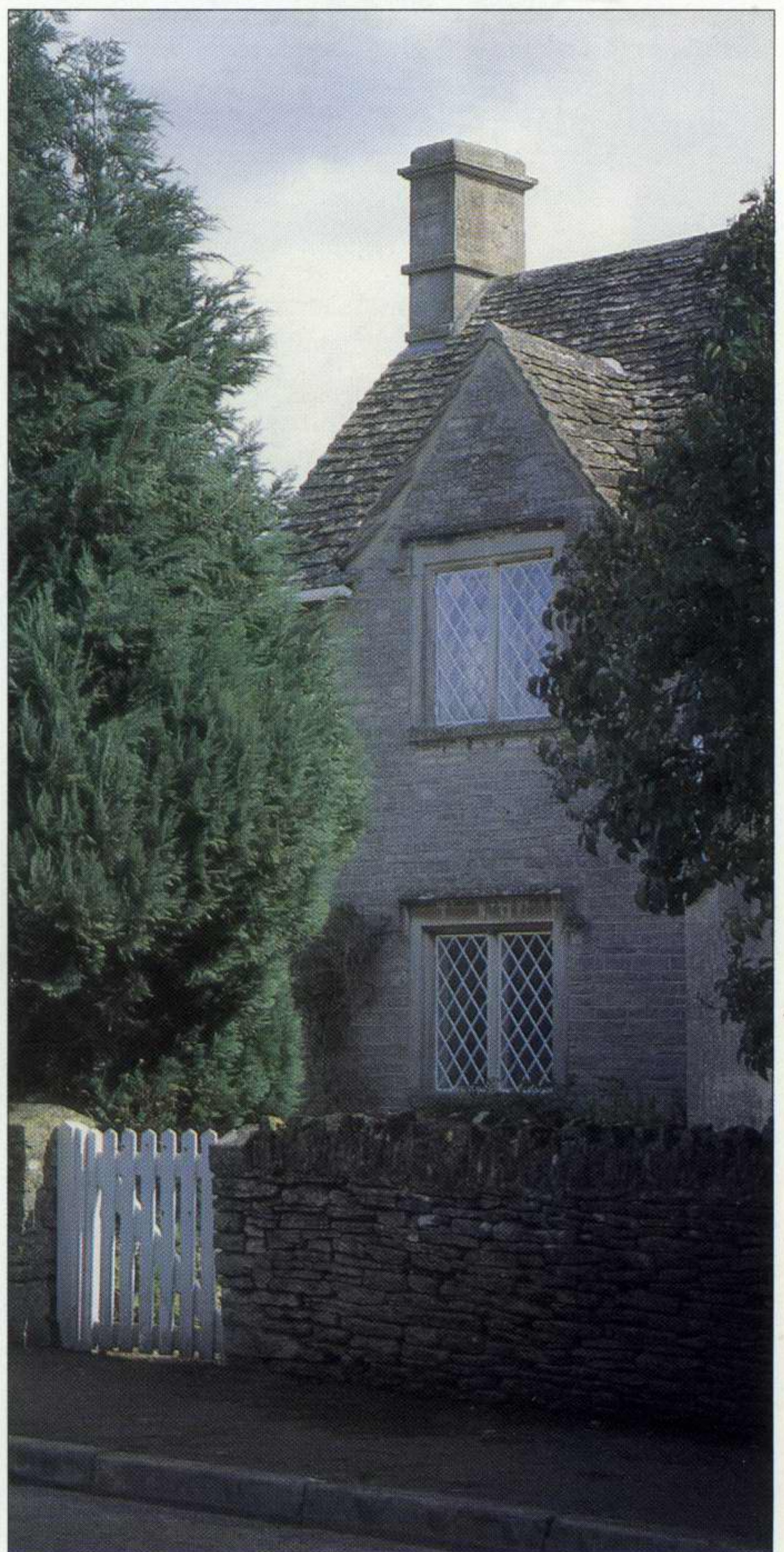
Steep, pointed gables, painted gable rafters, stone mullioned windows and colourful roof tiles with lichen are among the characteristic features of Down Ampney cottages.

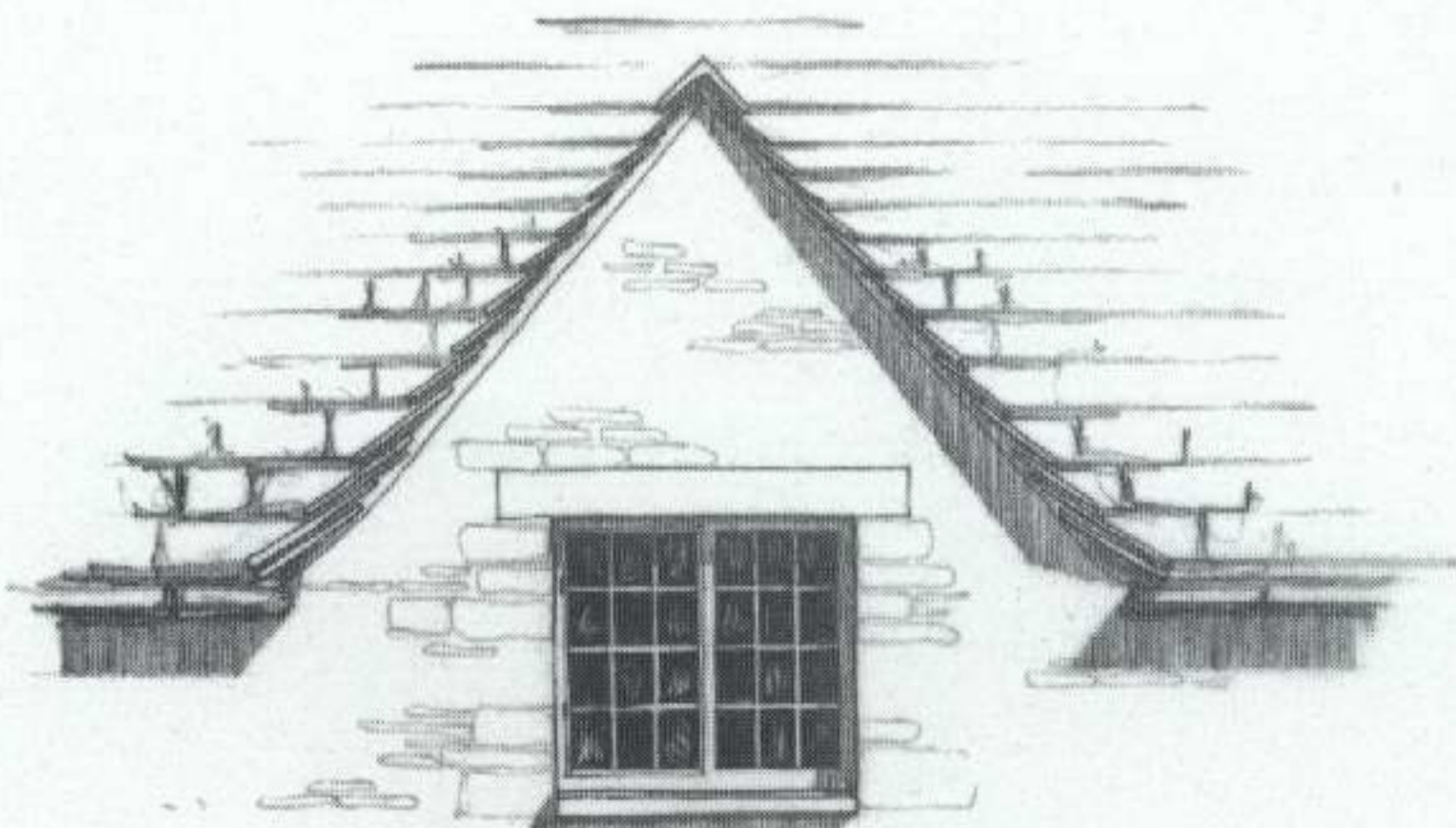
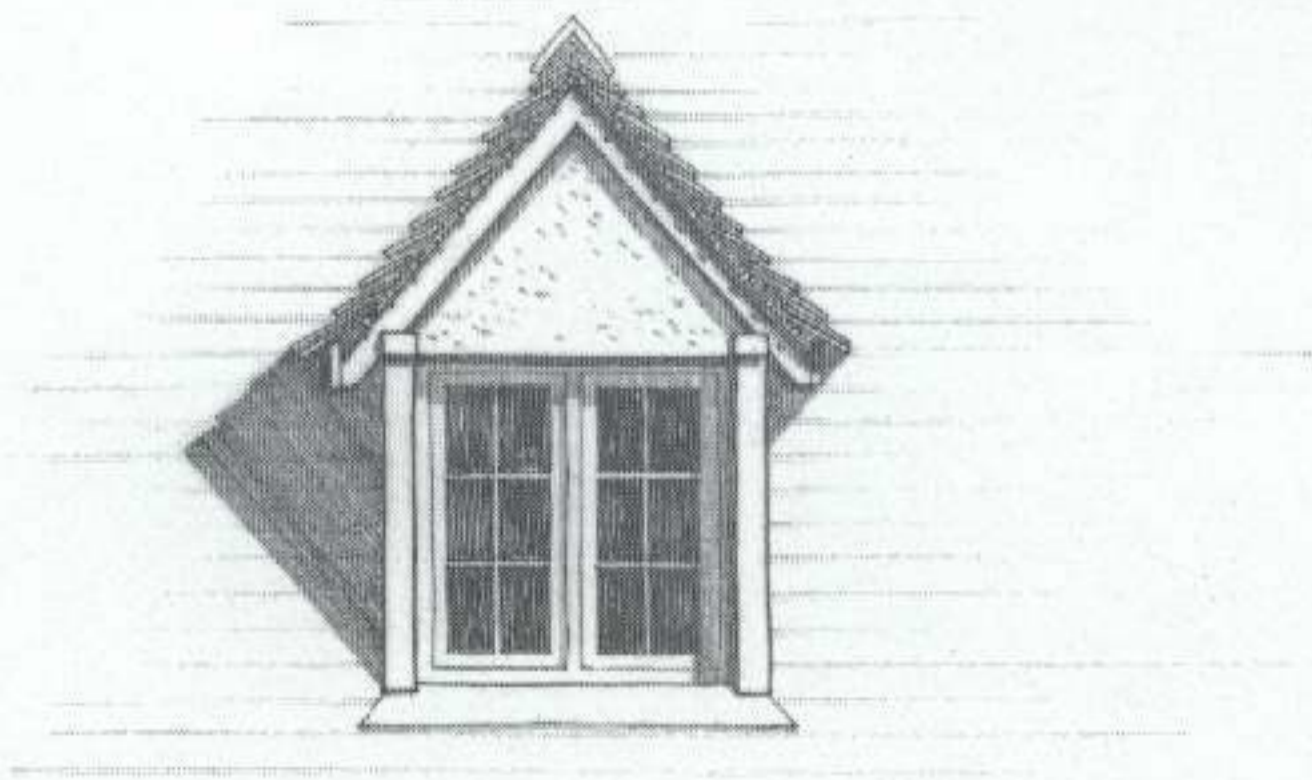
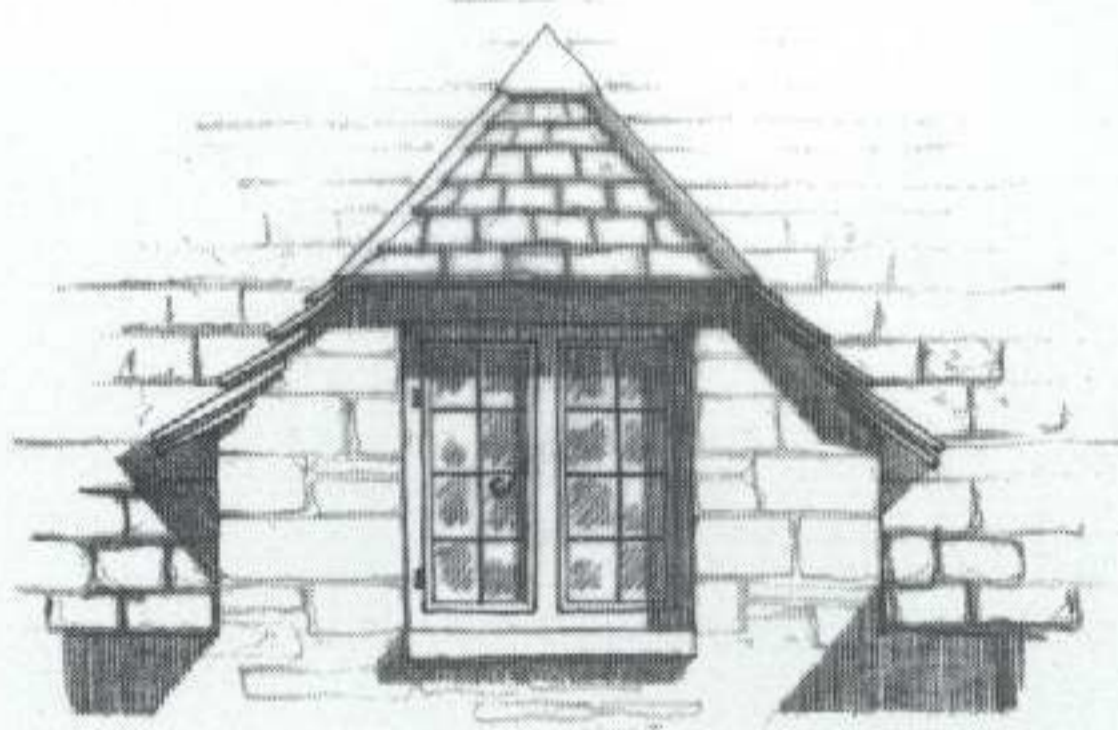
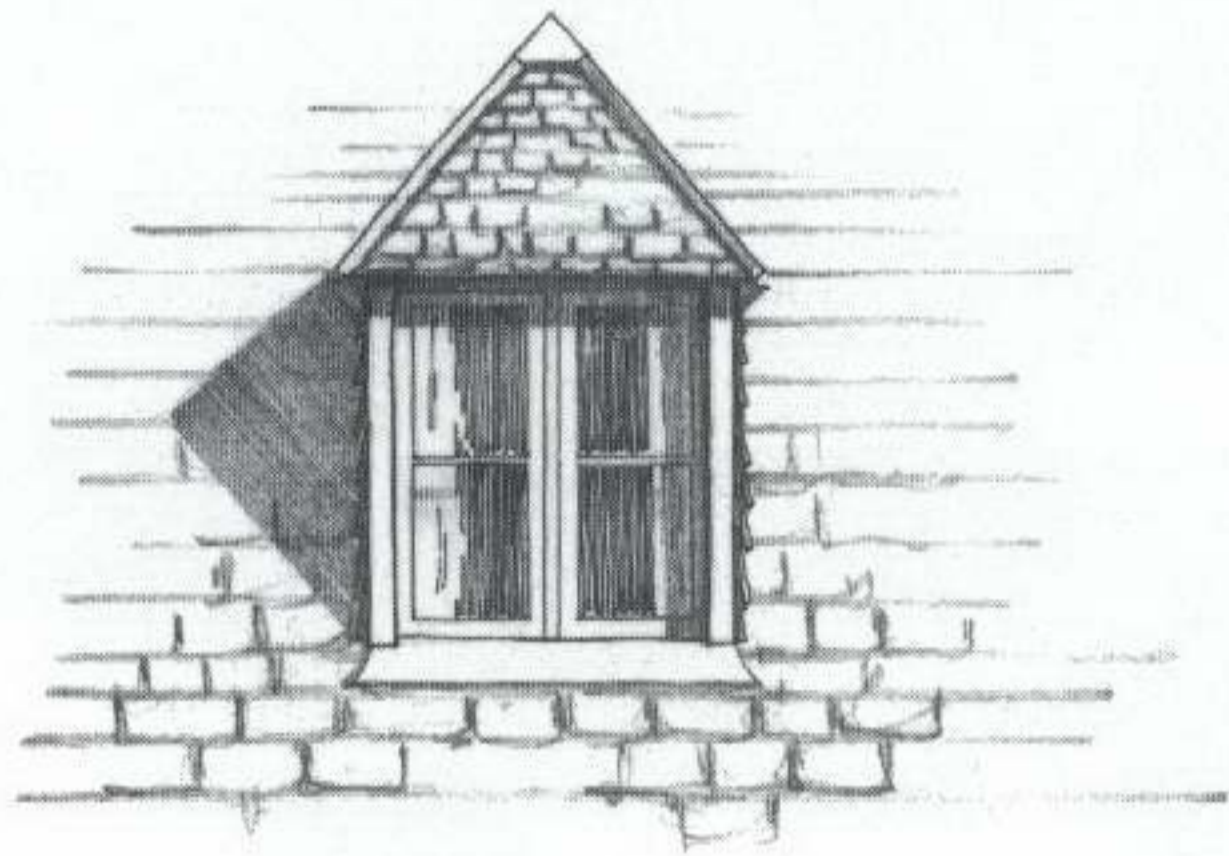
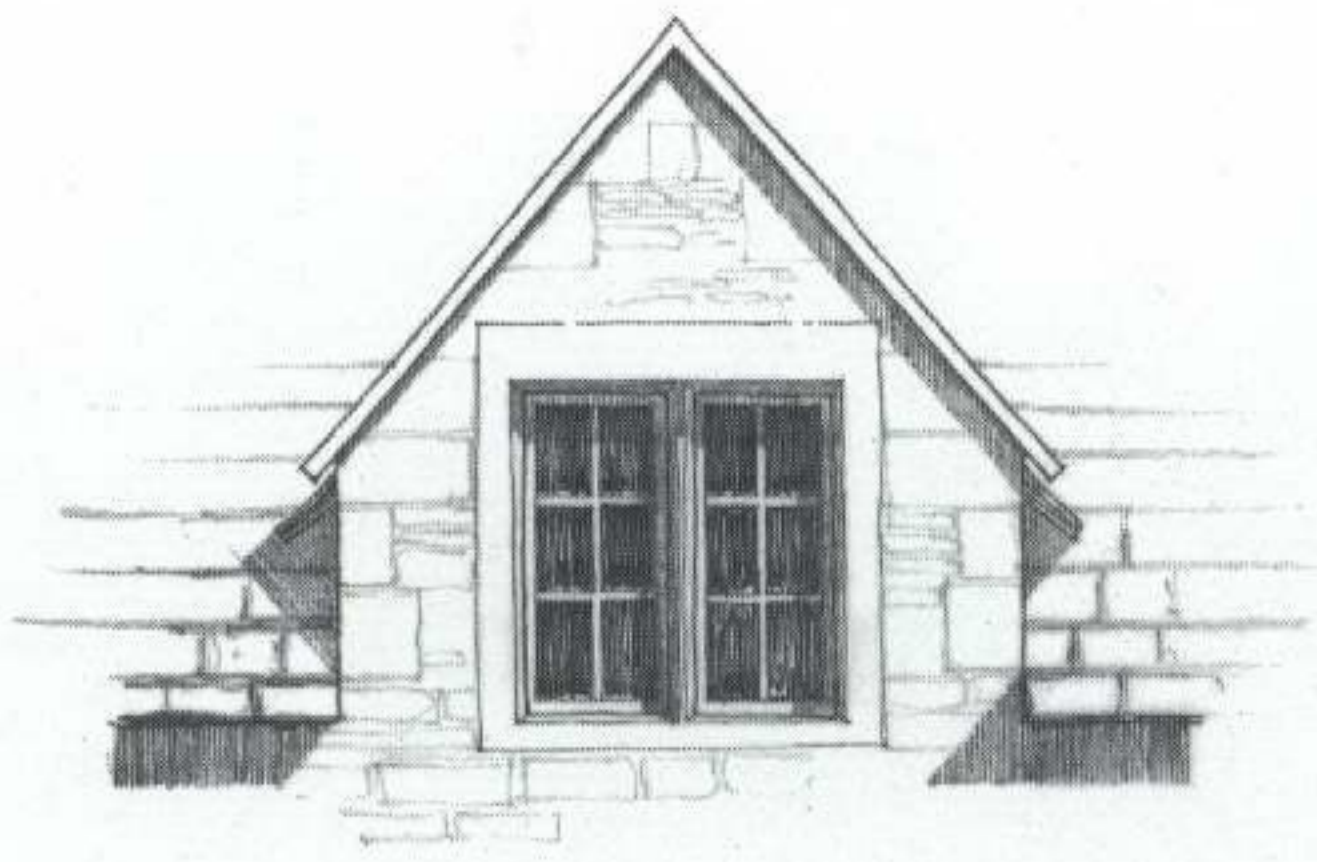
This recently-built house (above right) in Down Ampney is generally admired as a good attempt to adapt the traditional style within modern materials and constraints. Gables, mullions, porch and string-course are all in keeping with much older local properties.



The Broadleaze estate at the northern end of Down Ampney is currently somewhat isolated by its position and by its uncharacteristic architecture of red brick. Future development will aim to integrate Broadleaze harmoniously with the rest of the village.

Down Ampney's distinctive building style is also expressed in this delightful façade, with diamond-lead windows, a strong chimney, and a dry stone wall with a simple cottage gate in front.





Windows and doors

Many modern houses have windows that are wider than the traditional double casement. It would strengthen the character of Down Ampney if typically narrow, vertical window proportions were used on new buildings. Stone mullions are common in the village and this traditional style should be continued where possible. Alternatively timber cottage casements could be used. Wooden window frames should be painted rather than stained. Aluminium or plastic windows should be avoided.

Solid wooden doors of simple, traditional design are generally appropriate. Again, ginger or 'mahogany' wood stains should be avoided. Paint colours should ideally be white, estate livery, or muted tones.

Garages and hardstandings

The traditional cottages of Down Ampney do not have garages, and this contributes to their simple charm. New garages should preferably be set to the rear of the property. Garages should be built with similar roof pitches, materials and door colours to the older buildings in the village. Carports and similar shelters are not appropriate.

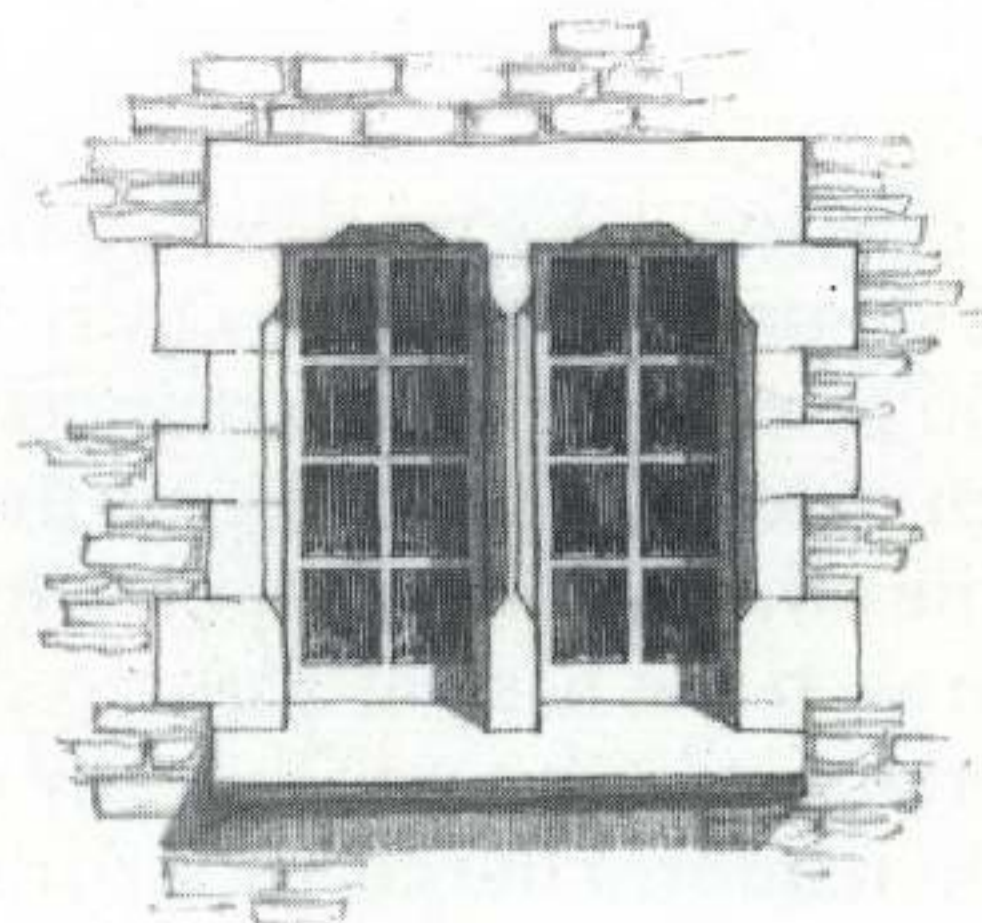
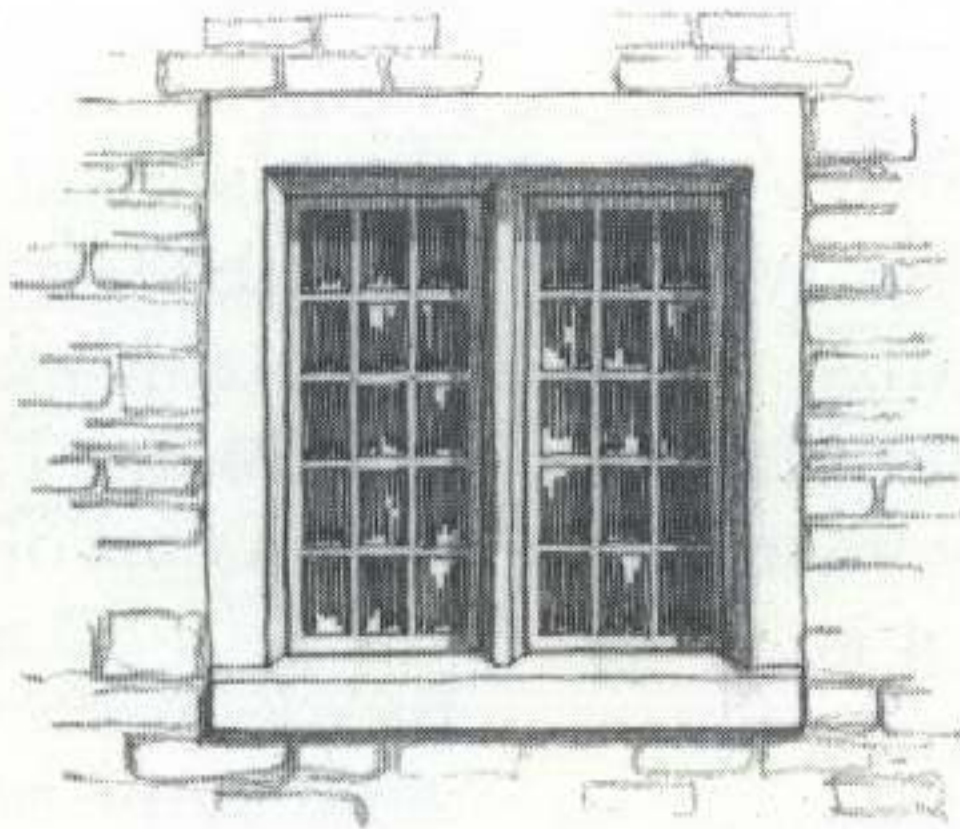
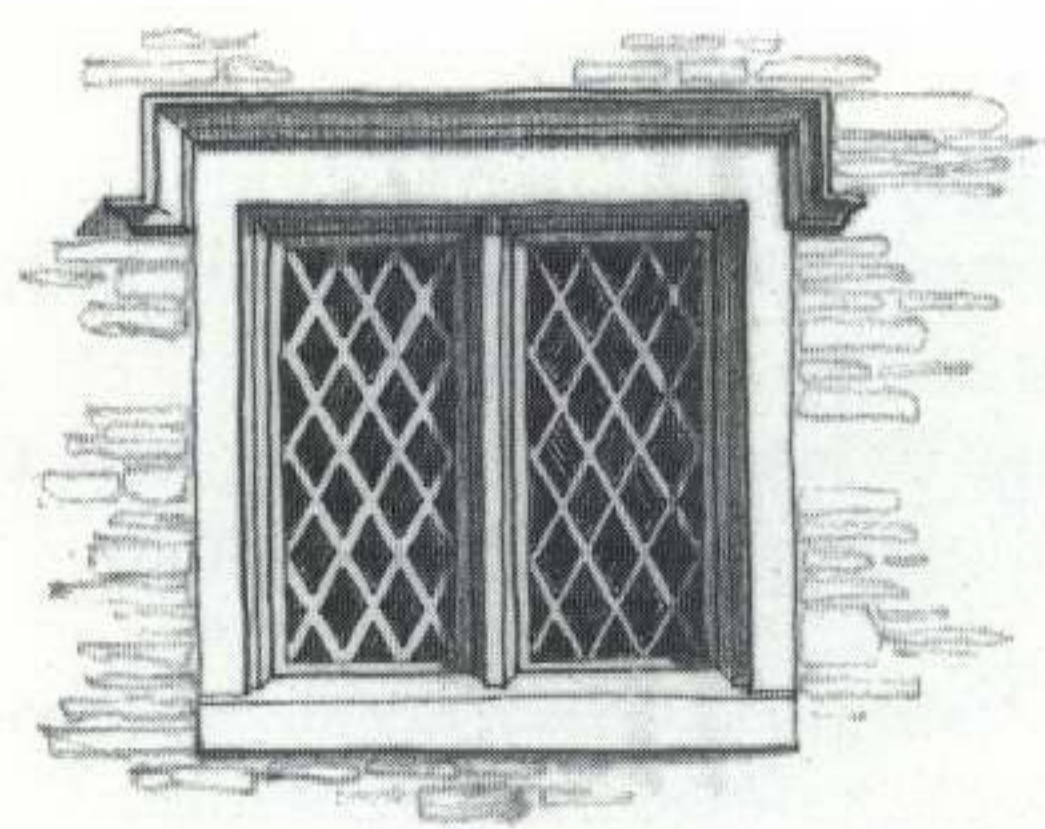
Paved or tarmac patios and hardstandings tend to detract from the pleasant effect of large front gardens in the village. Where possible, such areas should be located beside or behind the house rather than in front of it. Tree and shrub planting can help to soften the appearance of these otherwise bare areas and care should be taken in the choice of surface material.

Materials

In the conservation area and in the heart of the village, new buildings in prominent locations should use natural Cotswold stone for walls. These should not be painted, but treatment with traditional colourless lime water is well worth considering to help preserve the stone. Specialist advice on obtaining natural stone or stone slates, and using traditional lime techniques, is available from the District Council.

Roof materials in the existing village include a variety of genuine stone slates, Welsh slates and clay roof tiles. This balance and diversity should be maintained, particularly in new development in the conservation area and in prominent locations in the centre of the village. Elsewhere, high-quality reconstituted stone roof slates would be appropriate.

Variations on the theme of dormer windows in Down Ampney are all vigorous and pleasing to the eye. Different styles may be used on a single building provided the result is balanced and harmonious.



Extensions and alterations

Existing estate cottages, particularly those built in semi-detached pairs, have distinctive proportions which may be spoiled by building insensitive extensions. A large addition to one cottage may destroy the balanced proportions of the pair. Extensions and subsidiary buildings such as conservatories are therefore best located to the rear of old buildings.

Conservatories are not characteristic of the old village and should, therefore, be designed and located with particular care to avoid dominating the scene. A detached summerhouse in the rear garden might be more appropriate in certain cases.

Positioning and boundaries

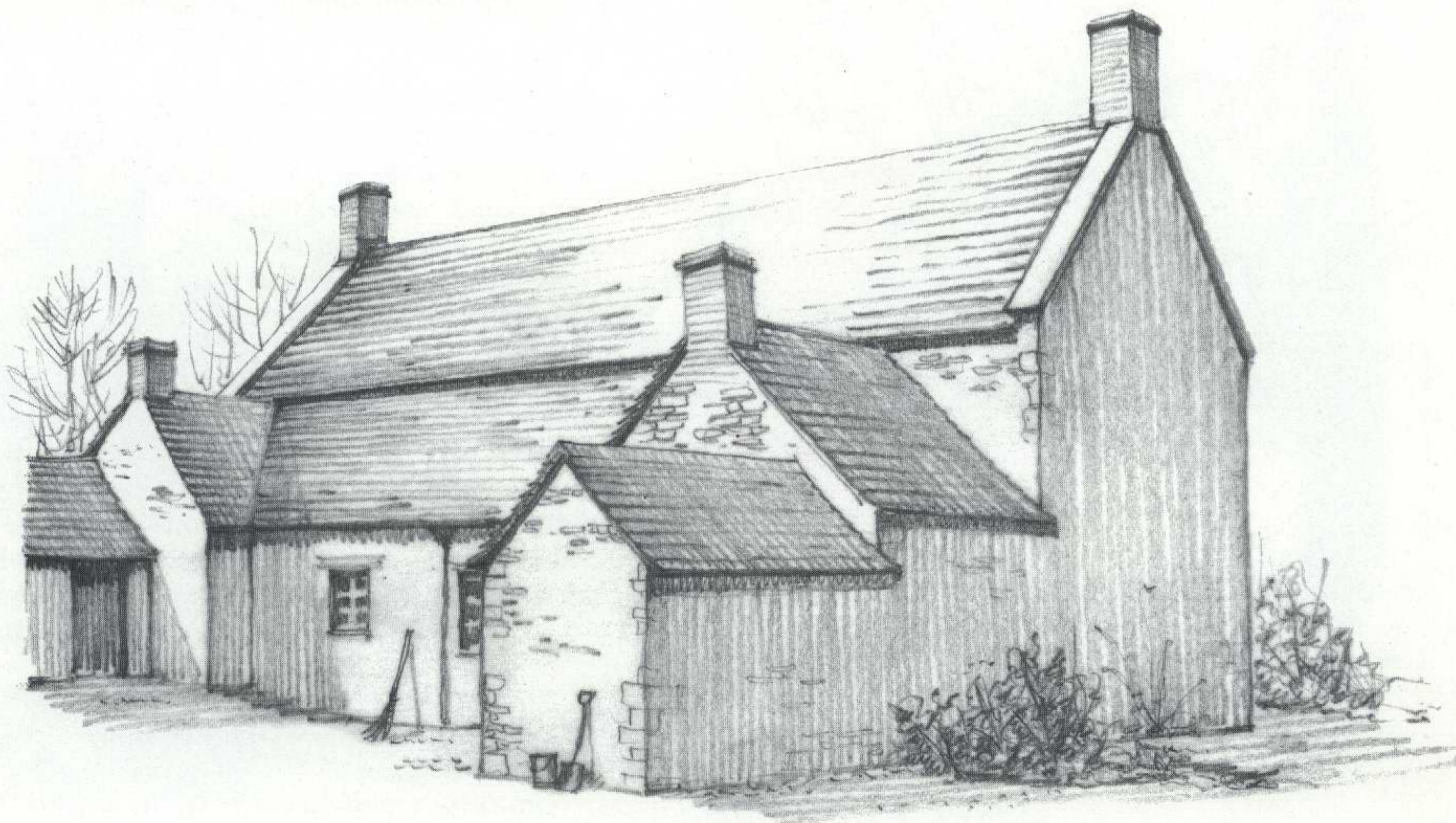
The traditional cottages set in large front gardens are essential to Down Ampney's character, and this set-back positioning of buildings within their gardens should be followed where possible.

The boundaries of gardens in the heart of the village should be marked by dry stone walls, or hedges: hawthorn is the traditional hedging species in the village. Cypress hedges are particularly intrusive and should be avoided.

Rear garden boundaries could also use hazel wattle hurdles for privacy, which are a feature of Down Ampney. Larchlap panel fencing is inappropriate, especially if brightly stained.

Above: As with dormers, stone mullioned windows are characteristic of the village, but there is still scope for a considerable range of design. Typical windows include those with diamond panes, small rectangular leaded lights and simple timber casements.

Below: Simple extensions and outshuts are often added to the rear of Down Ampney cottages, leaving the front façade balanced and uncluttered. A range of roof heights adds interest to the general village roofscape.



THE SITES FOR DEVELOPMENT

There are two sites for development in Down Ampney proposed by the District Local Plan, which should be considered in conjunction with this design guide. One site adjoins the Broadleaze estate and the other is located in the centre of the village. While each site has particular constraints, it is important in both cases that any development should reinforce the characteristic style of Down Ampney, and include a mixture of small estate cottages and larger village houses.

Development in the centre of the village

This development site adjoins the field opposite the school and village shop, roughly in the middle of Down Ampney. New buildings here would be very prominent when viewed from the village street and should not detract from the view across the fields to the church spire and surrounding landscape.

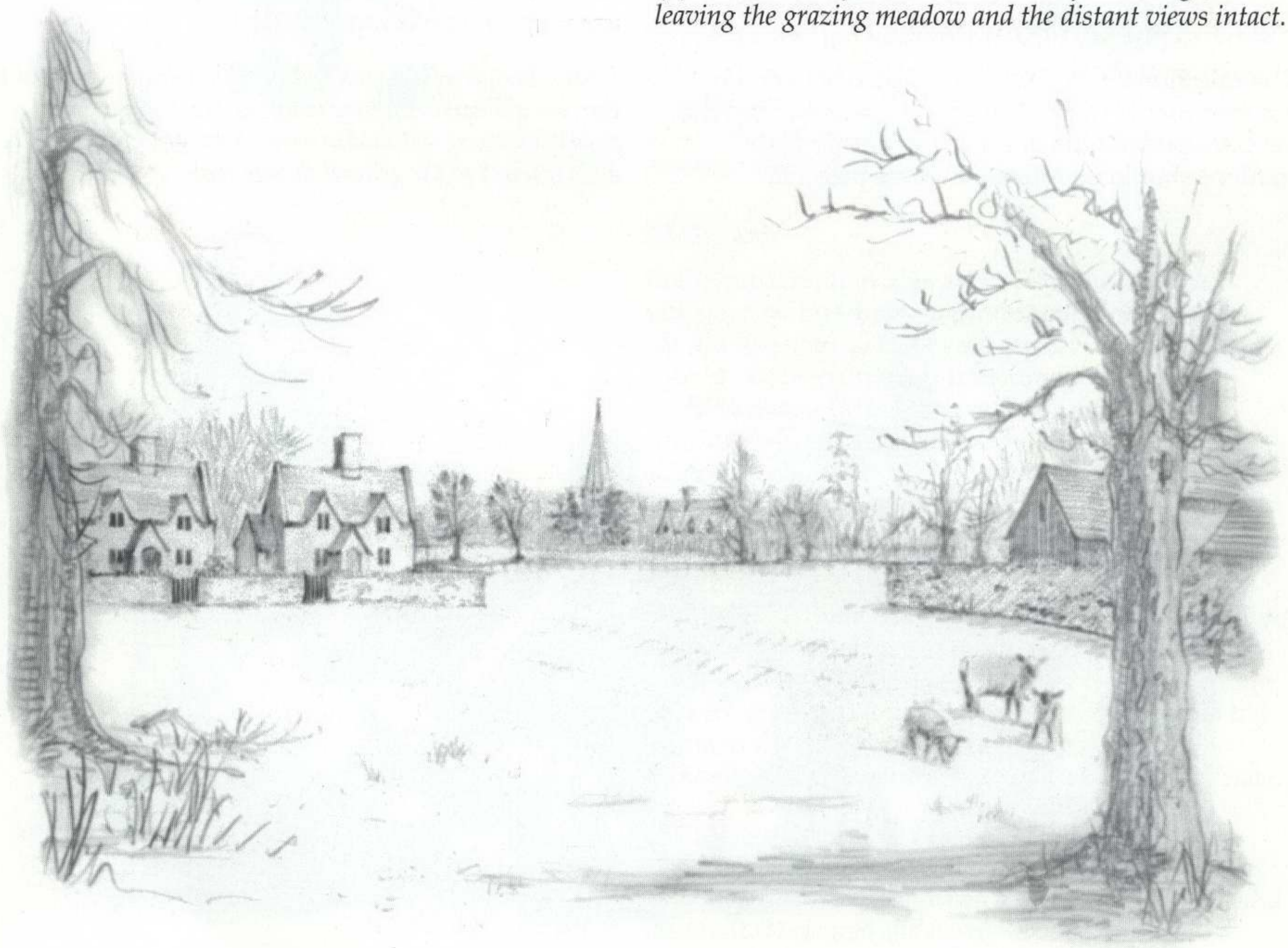
All new buildings in this area should be built with natural stone, and boundaries should consist of dry stone walls with careful tree and shrub planting.

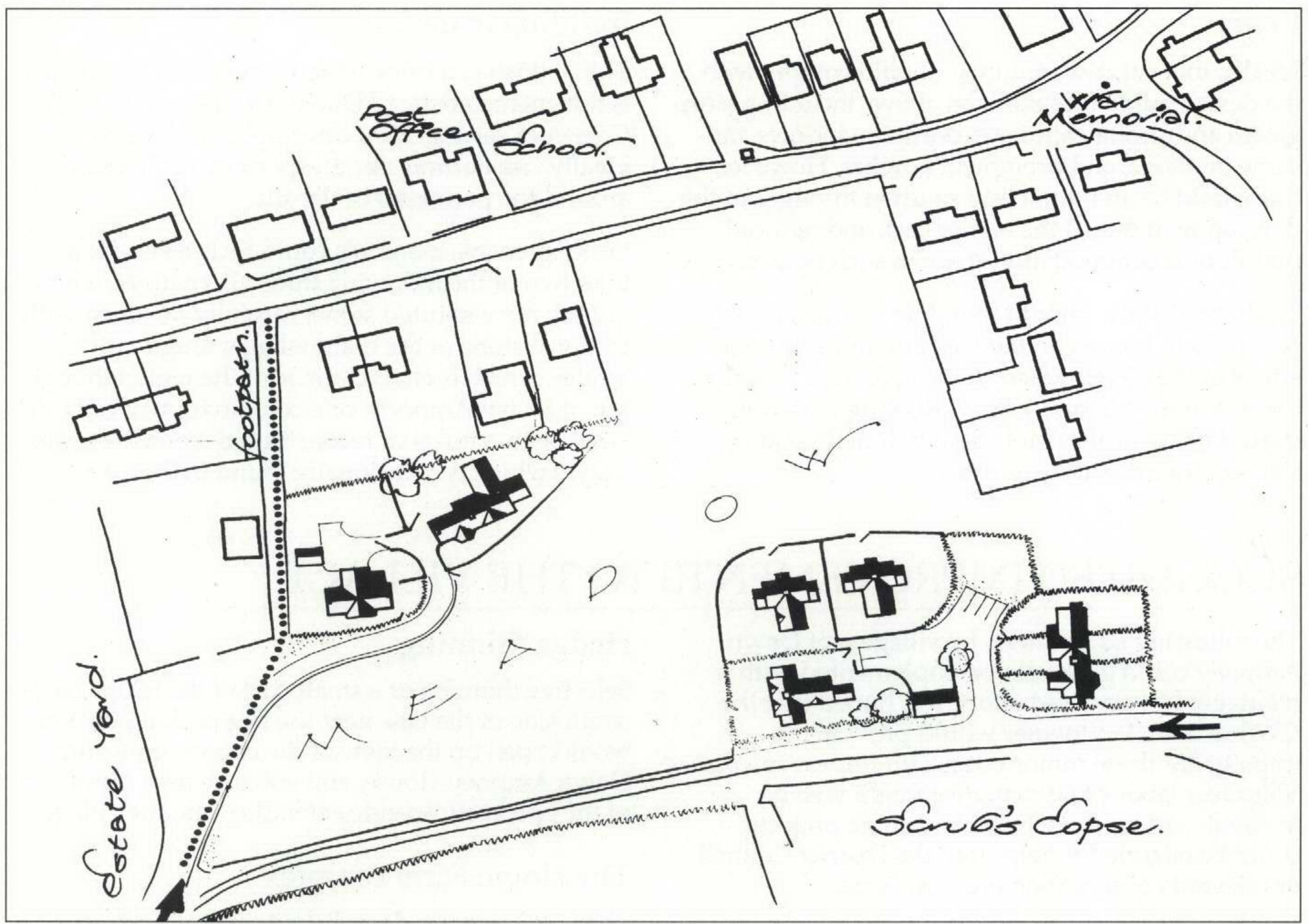
Roofs should be steeply pitched in the style described earlier. Lower-pitched roofs would only be acceptable on outbuildings or single-storey extensions. The range of traditional roofing materials in this part of the village should be maintained.

Key features of the Down Ampney style, such as solid stone porches, chimneys, narrow windows with stone mullions, and gabled dormers, should be used throughout the development. There are many opportunities for designing interesting new buildings within the constraints of the characteristic Down Ampney style. Houses flanking the line of sight from the village street towards the church should be particularly carefully designed to complement the view.

Buildings should be cottage-sized, and face directly on to the village meadow, with cars and garages sited to their rear. The building line should be consistent. Terraces would not be appropriate, but paired cottages could fit well into the traditional village character.

An artist's impression and plan (below and opposite top) of possible development in the centre of the village, leaving the grazing meadow and the distant views intact.





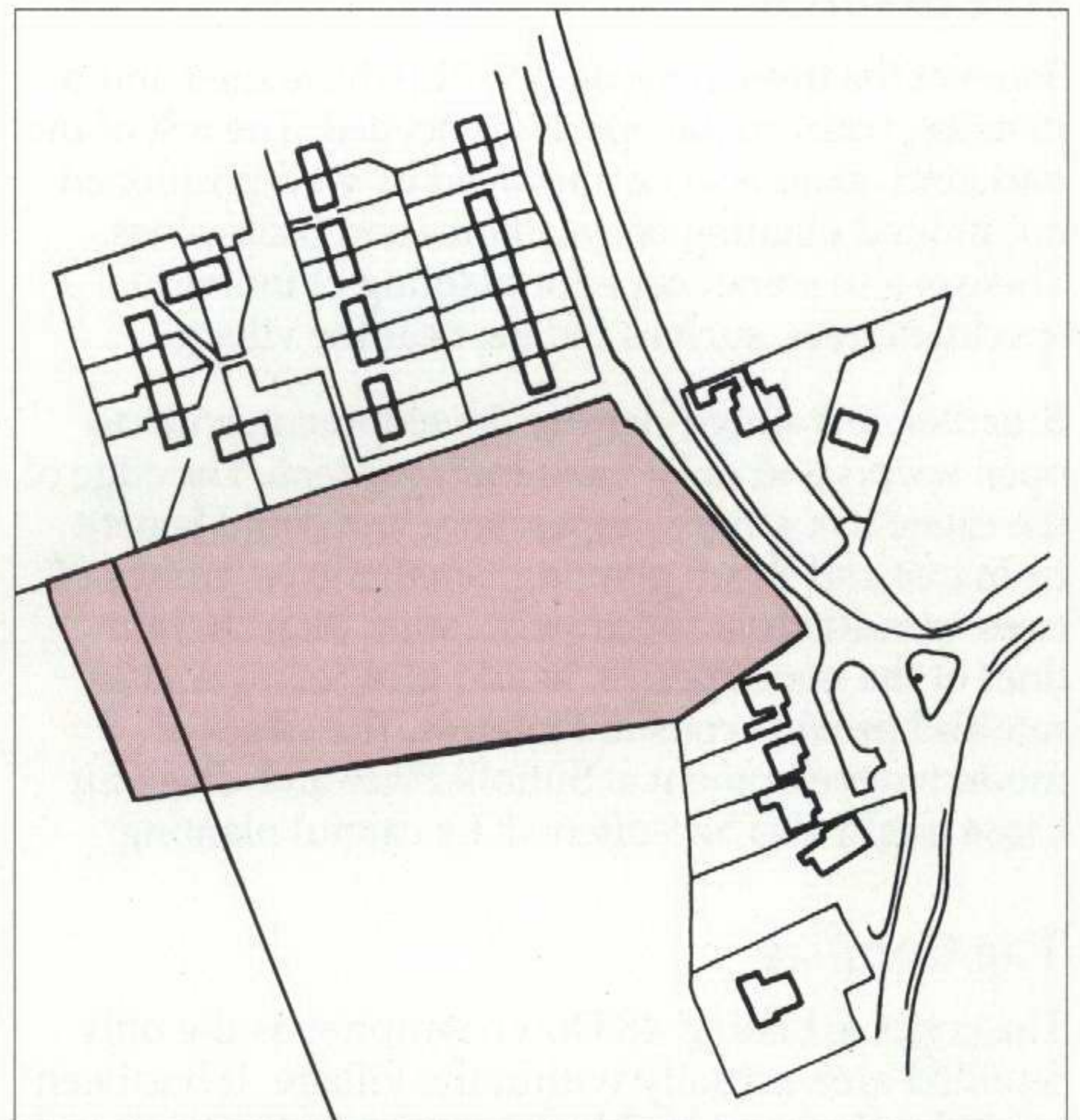
Development adjoining Broadleaze

Broadleaze is currently somewhat divided from the main part of Down Ampney by several factors, particularly its separate location; the straight boundary of the estate; and the uncharacteristic red brick of its buildings.

It is therefore essential that development should help to integrate Broadleaze with the rest of the village and the surrounding landscape. Boundaries should be softened by hedges, stone walls, and groups of trees. A route for pedestrians and cyclists only, originating from between nos. 21 and 22 Broadleaze, will link up with the rest of the village.

There is an acknowledged need for low-cost smaller housing, which should form the majority of new building on this site. However there should also be a few larger houses to reflect the typical mixture. Two-storey buildings of slightly different individual height and proportion, on curved access roads rather than rectangular blocks, will maintain the characteristic roofscape of the village.

Houses should be set back, with unobtrusive garaging, to allow some space for front gardens. Windows should generally be painted timber casements, perhaps in 'estate livery' colours.



The proposed area of development adjoining the Broadleaze estate is particularly important and sensitive in that it should provide a harmonious visual link between the new brick houses and the older style of the main village. It should also be designed for improved social contact and support.

Roofs

Ideally, roofs of new buildings should comply with the design guidelines outlined above, including steep gables and strong chimneys, dormer windows and stone mullions, and prominent porches. However, this would be an impractical solution throughout the development due to the higher cost, and reduced first-floor accommodation space in such houses.

Traditional styles should therefore be most closely observed in houses on the western and southern edges of the development to complement visually the rest of the historic village. Roofing materials should be natural or high-quality imitation stone slate on traditional steep roofs.

Building materials

The pinkish-red brick which constitutes Broadleaze is not characteristic of Down Ampney or its south Cotswold setting. New development should, ideally, use natural stone, especially for houses around the perimeter of the site.

Less expensive materials could include no more than two of the following three alternatives: a high-quality reconstituted stone, carefully matched with the local stone of the main village; rough-cast render, which is characteristic of the region though not of Down Ampney; or a combination of red brick walls with natural or reconstituted stone dressings, a style which is occasionally found in the area.

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS TO THE VILLAGE

The following suggestions by villagers of Down Ampney could generally be implemented with relatively low cost and effort. It is hoped that the CWS as main landowner would provide the impetus for these minor but useful improvements. Volunteer labour and expertise might well be available within the village, and some projects could be eligible for help from the District Council or relevant conservation organisations.

Tree planting

Some of the trees in Sycamore Walk have died and re-planting with similar species is needed. The rest of the parkland could also be improved by well-positioned but limited planting of sycamores and Scots pines. There is also some scope for planting of individual specimen trees, such as cedars, near the village.

Broadleaze is a high-density development, with no open spaces and only small front gardens. The edge of the estate has a 'hard' appearance and could benefit from tree and shrub planting. Small mixed groups of trees or individual specimens, rather than straight lines of the same species, would grow at a variable rate and provide constant interest. The edges of modern development at Suffolk Place and Chestnut Close might also be 'softened' by careful planting.

The Coppice

The coppice behind 48 Down Ampney is the only wooded area actually within the village. It has been spoilt by dumped builder's waste and the trees need thinning under a woodland management programme. A footpath through the managed coppice could be a pleasant feature. Another possibility would be to restore the two neglected stone outbuildings here, including the former saw shed, as workshops.

Hedge thinning

Selective thinning of a small part of the hedge on the south side of the lane near the egg packing station would open up the view of the church spire and Down Ampney House, and enhance the impression of the open countryside extending into the village.

The Home Farm complex

The CWS recently demolished several modern barns and outbuildings at Home Farm. This has enhanced Church Lane and has provided a much better setting for the traditional stone barns and the farmhouse. However, the debris from the demolished buildings still remains on their derelict hard standings, and it is hoped that the CWS Farm Group will tidy this area.

Circular walks and footpaths

There is a lack of footpaths which link the village with the surrounding countryside. More 'permissive' paths could be designed but would need to be well signposted. A footpath across the meadow opposite the school could be an attractive and useful feature, but would have to be designed in conjunction with any new development on the site.

Airfield memorial

The present memorial is a plaque mounted on a small plinth of breeze blocks on the south side of the airfield, an area identified for potential mineral extraction. In this event, the memorial should be moved. This would provide a good opportunity to commission a new, more appropriate memorial, befitting the significance of the airfield and sacrifice of many of those who flew from Down Ampney into battle. There are a number of possible locations for a new memorial.

