

This Design Guide is a revised version of a draft document which was made available for public discussion and comment between 10th. July 1991 and 11th. November 1991.

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## Design Guide 4

# FARM BUILDING CONVERSIONS

# OGWR BOROUGH COUNCIL GUIDES TO DESIGN



## FOREWORD

This series of guides to design prepared by the Borough Council has three main aims. They are:

1. To make clear the Local Planning Authority's expectations for the design of development.
2. To encourage, as a consequence, development of a high design standard that will result in a benefit in environmental and landscape terms.
3. To reduce the need for revision of the design of proposals, and thus to increase the speed of the determination of planning applications.

Five secondary aims clarify the criteria for judging the benefit that may be achieved by the design of a development.

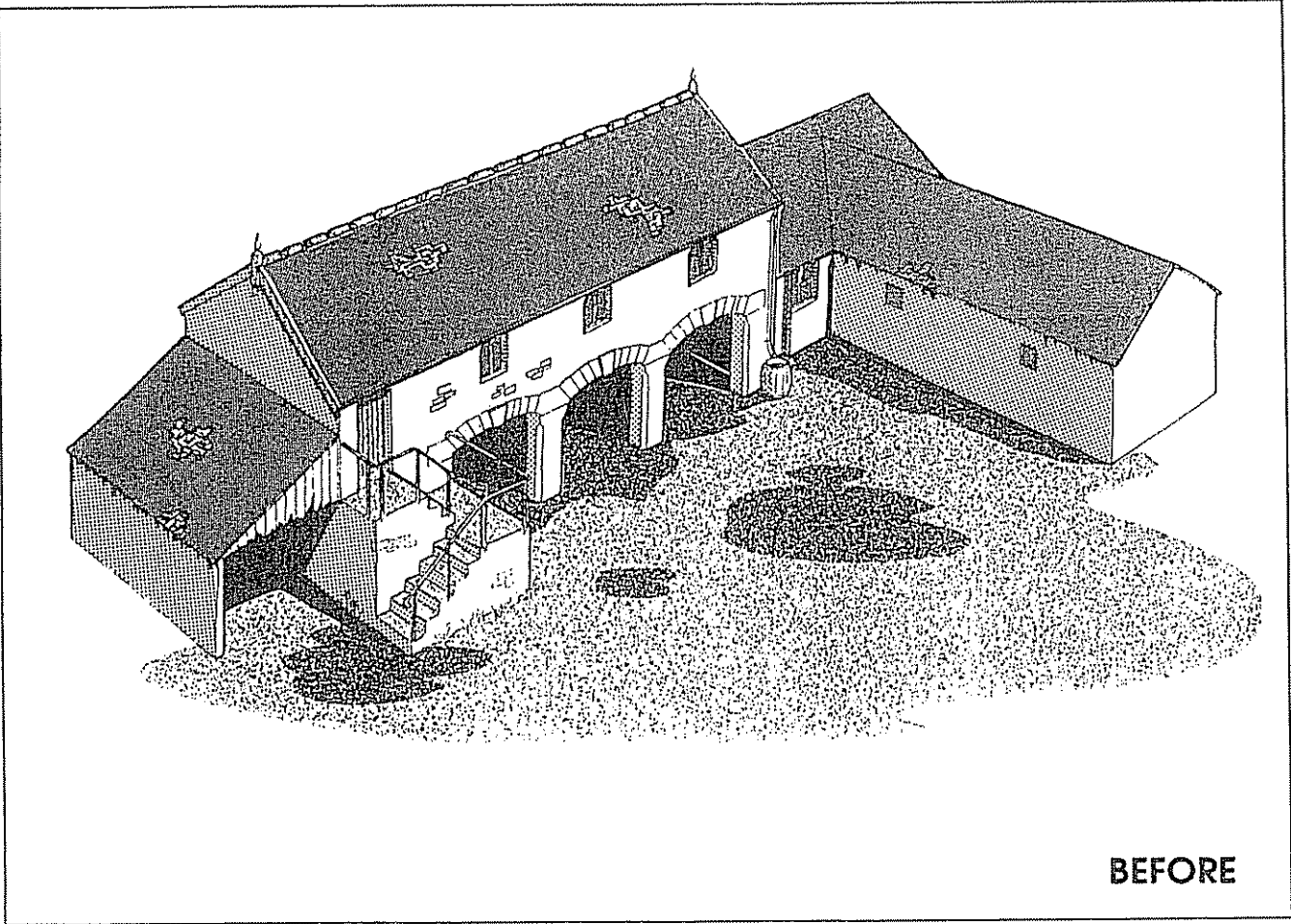
Those secondary aims of the design advice are:

- A. To create a positive area image, a sense of local identity.
- B. To ensure the integration of development into the surrounding area.
- C. To ensure the protection, and preferably enhancement, of the landscape or the townscape.
- D. To ensure the protection or enhancement of the appearance or character of areas of special interest or character.
- E. To ensure the protection or enhancement of the residential amenity of people living in the vicinity of, or who will live in, a development.

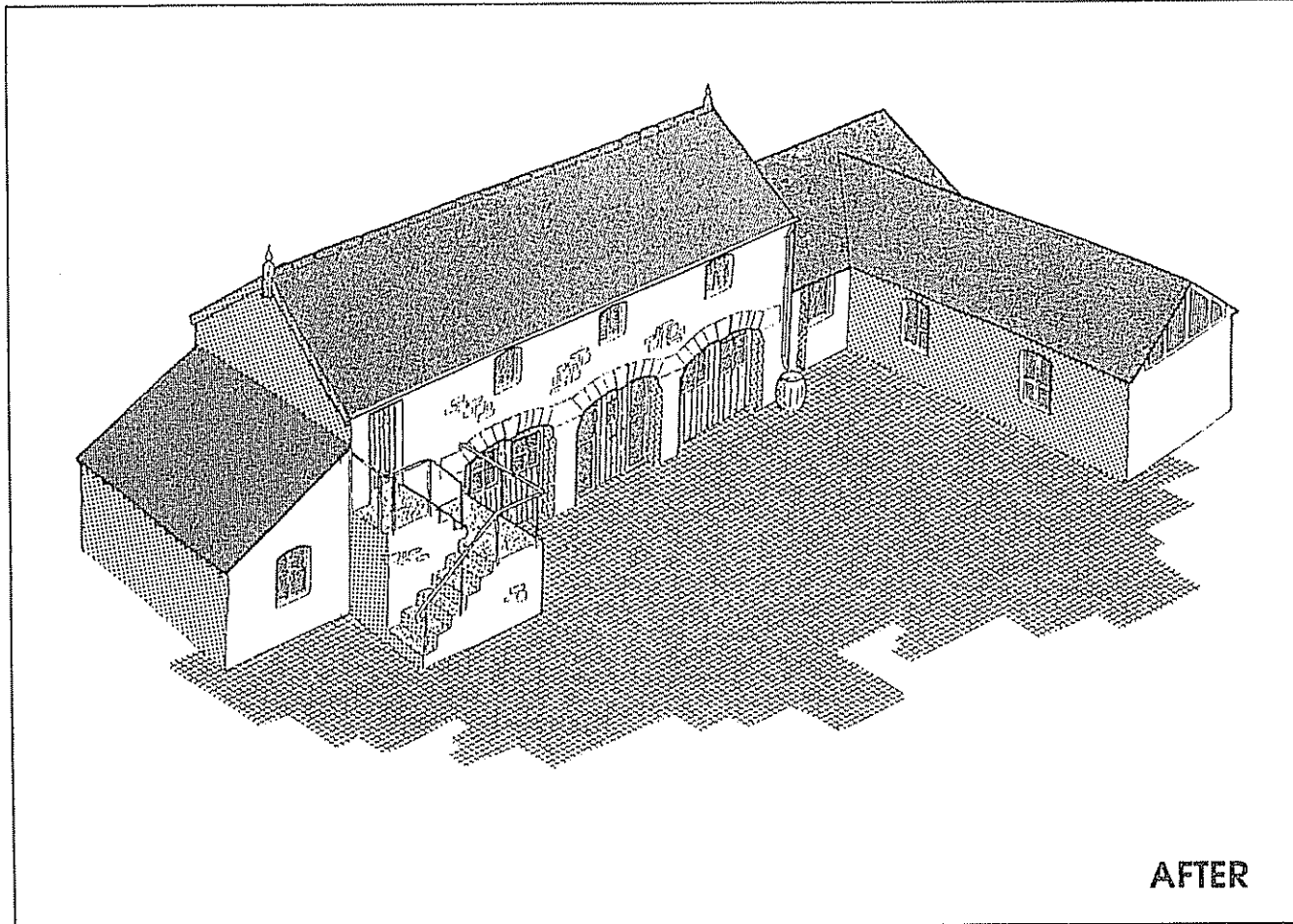
# FARM BUILDINGS CONVERSIONS

## CONTENTS

	Advice Note	Page No.
1. INTRODUCTION		3
Objectives		3
2. ADVICE NOTES		4
Access	1	4
Car parking	2	4
Privacy	3	4
Amenity space	4	4
Height and shape	5	4
Primary elevations	6	5
Secondary elevations	7	6
Materials	8	6
Details	9	7
Signage	10	7
Setting	11	8
3. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY		9
4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS		10
5. FURTHER INFORMATION		10



BEFORE



AFTER

## Design Guide 4

# FARM BUILDING CONVERSIONS

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This guide is one of a series prepared by the Borough Council. It is about the re-use of redundant buildings in the countryside.

1.2. Normally, development in the countryside is not permitted unless it is necessary for agriculture, or forestry. This policy is essential to protect the character of the countryside from the spread of urban and suburban development.

1.3. The conversion of some farm buildings to new uses, however, can be considered as an exception to the restriction of development in the countryside.

1.4. Old farm buildings can contribute to the character of the countryside. They are reminders of the rural past, and they are often examples of building craftsmanship. Re-use of such buildings, if they become redundant for agricultural purposes, can be compatible with the protection of the countryside, but only if the design of the conversion is such

that a casual glance reveals firstly and dominantly the original character of the building.

1.5. Housing is the most commonly proposed new use for redundant farm buildings. Unfortunately such conversions are the most difficult to do well. Usually they spoil the rural character of the farm building and its setting. To help avoid such damage the following advice notes concentrate mainly on residential conversions. The principles outlined, however, can also be applied to other uses of redundant buildings where the structure or the setting of the building needs to be modified.

1.6. In every case it is a basic principle that the proposed conversion should spring from the potential of the building. It must not be the result of the imposition of preconceived ideas.

**1.7. This guidance does not relate to buildings which have become so derelict that they can be brought back into use only by complete or substantial reconstruction. Proposals for the re-use**

**of such buildings will be considered in the same way as proposals for new buildings.**

1.8. The aims of the Design Guide Series are set out in the foreword. Within these general aims there are four specific objectives of this particular guide. They are:

*a. To ensure that a converted farm building meets the appropriate planning standards for its new use so that it does not create problems for its users or its neighbours.*

(See Advice Notes 1 - 4).

*b. To ensure that a converted farm building retains its original character.*

(See Advice Notes 5 - 10).

*c. To ensure that the setting of the converted building retains its rural character.*

(See Advice Note 11).

*d. To ensure that a proposed conversion takes account of any existing wildlife importance of the farm building.*

(See Advice Notes 12 and 13).

## 2. ADVICE NOTES

### 2.1. NOTE 1: There should be a safe vehicular access to the farm building.

2.1.1. For a redundant building to be capable of conversion it must be accessible, and it is important that the use of the access does not cause traffic hazards.

2.1.2. The junction of a farm building's private drive with the public highway should therefore include visibility splays of a size appropriate to the speed of traffic on the public road. The first 10 to 20 metres of the drive should be finished in permanent materials to prevent mud or stones being carried on to the public road. The drive should be widened near its junction with the public road, and should have passing bays if more than 100 metres in length.

### 2.2. NOTE 2: Adequate car parking for the proposed use should be provided.

2.2.1. To prevent the obstruction of lanes by parked cars any proposal for the conversion of a farm building should show the provision of on site car parking to the Council's normal standards. These standards are set out in full in 'Parking Guidelines' by the Standing Conference on Regional Policy in South Wales. As converted farm buildings will tend to be in the countryside away from public transport services a generous provision of parking will be expected. Parking areas must be located and designed where they will not damage the setting of the building (See Note 11).

### 2.3. NOTE 3: The conversion should respect the privacy of any neighbouring houses.

2.3.1. The Council is concerned to prevent overlooking between the windows of neighbouring dwellings. There should be no less than 21.336 metres (70 feet) between facing habitable room windows. (A habitable room is a room used, or intended to be used, for dwelling purposes but not any room used exclusively as a

bathroom, hall, or utility room). Some relaxation of this standard may be possible if overlooking windows are in premises being created at the same time by the re-use of redundant farm buildings.

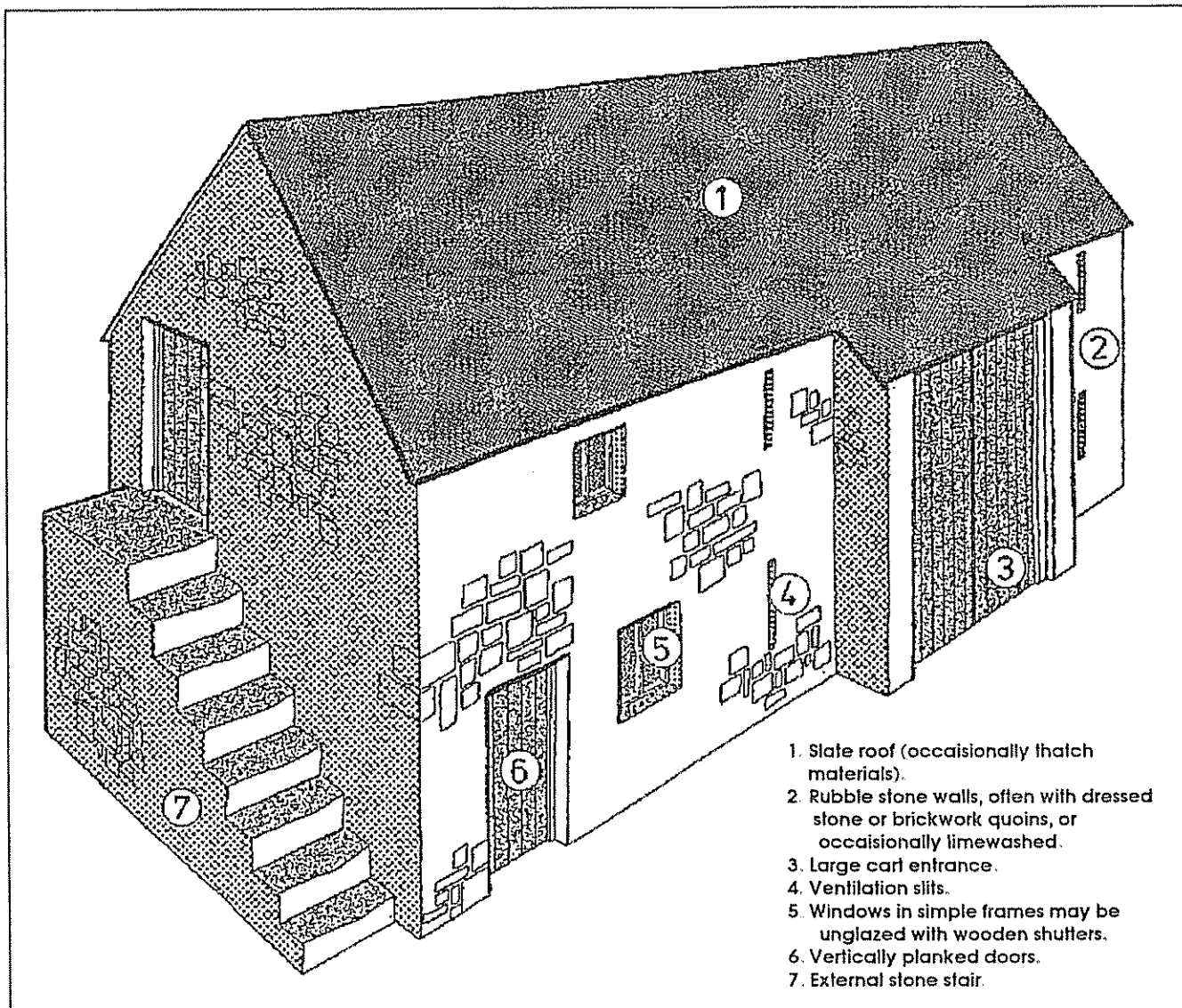
### 2.4. NOTE 4: A farm building converted to residential use should have sufficient amenity space for the enjoyment of its occupiers.

2.4.1. Amenity space, in other words a garden or private outdoor area, should be provided adjacent to any farm building being converted to residential use. There is no fixed standard for its provision, but a reasonable area should be available for the enjoyment of the occupants. (Conversions intended for tourist accommodation generally need less amenity space than those for permanent residence). In defining an area of amenity space consideration must be given to the character of the farm building's setting. (See Note 11).

### 2.5. NOTE 5: There should be no change to the height and shape of the building.

2.5.1. The height and shape of the existing building are considered to be basic components of its character. Proposals for re-use should not therefore seek to raise the ridge of the building as this affects its scale and proportions. Raising the eaves, or inserting dormer windows are also unsatisfactory because they rob the building of its shape.

2.5.2. Where an existing building is not tall enough to allow the insertion of an upper floor with a standard ceiling height, other possibilities may be considered. Firstly, the ceiling heights may be lowered using the flexibility now offered by the Building Regulations. Secondly, the ground level may be reduced inside the building. This will only occasionally be appropriate because of the care that must be given to protecting the building's foundations and to preventing dampness. It can be an expensive option. Thirdly, a limited headroom sleeping or work platform may be used within an open plan living



1. Slate roof (occasionally thatch materials).
2. Rubble stone walls, often with dressed stone or brickwork quoins, or occasionally limewashed.
3. Large cart entrance.
4. Ventilation slits.
5. Windows in simple frames may be unglazed with wooden shutters.
6. Vertically planked stair doors.
7. External stone stair.

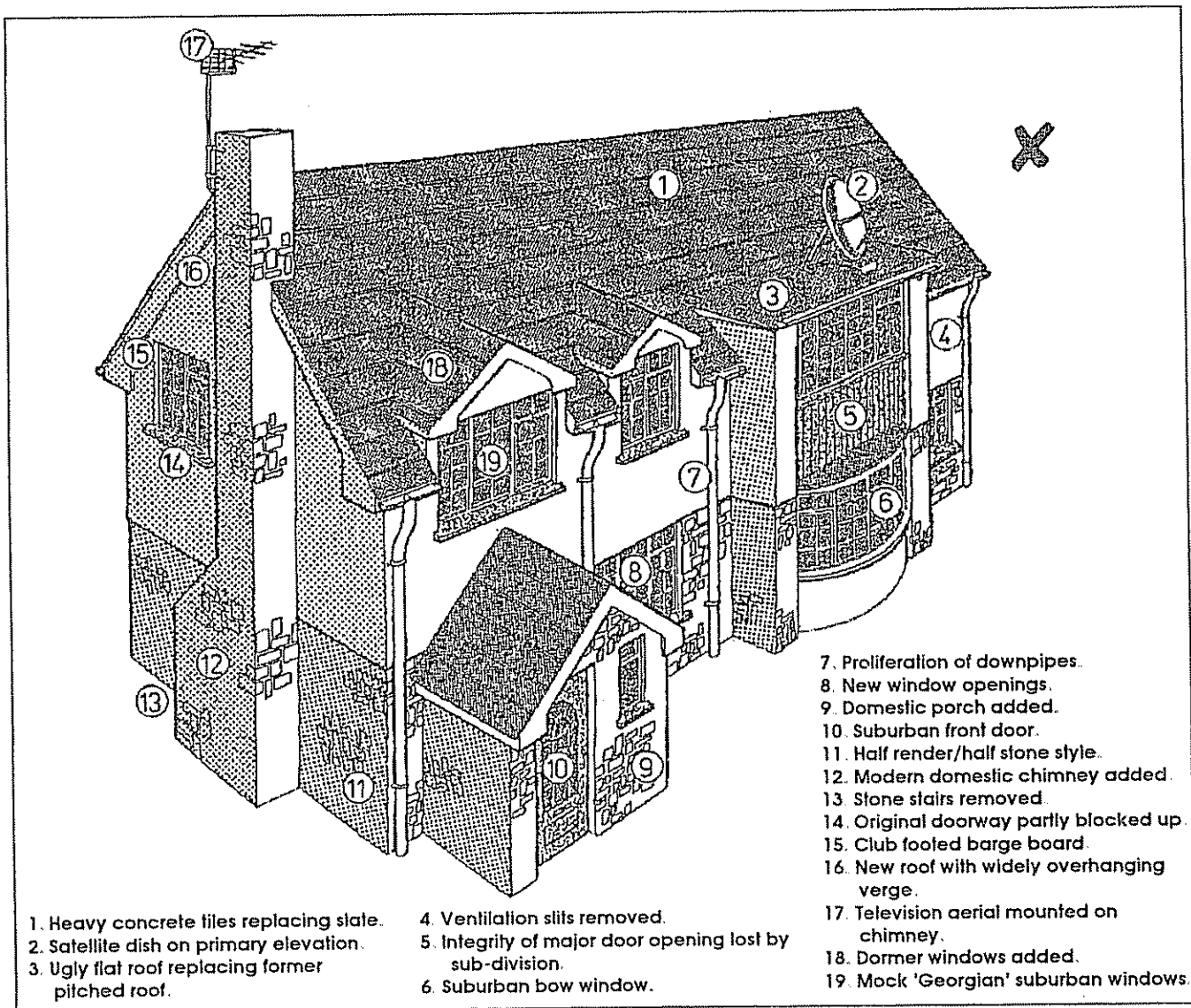
space. Fourthly, the upper floor may be dispensed with, using the generous height to give character to the rooms or to provide long term storage space.

2.5.3. Adding extensions will rarely be compatible with preserving existing character. Very occasionally it may be possible to use a small-scale addition to a secondary elevation provided that its design is harmonious with the original building. Normally, however, the conversion should be carried out within the original building envelope.

**2.6. NOTE 6:** There should be no change to those elevations which face public areas, contribute to the character of a building group, or have significant architectural features or character (the primary elevations).

2.6.1. By definition, primary elevations carry the major interest of the building and should be subject to minimal change. Original openings in primary elevations should not be blocked; new openings should not be made. Porches and extensions should not be built on primary elevations. (In fact, ordinary domestic porches are generally unsuitable for any elevation). Any feature of architectural interest such as string courses, date stones, dressed stone arches, arrow slit ventilators and old stone-mullioned windows should be carefully preserved. The nature of the primary elevations and the disposition of their openings are major constraints on the potential re-use of the building.

2.6.2. Some traditional farm buildings, by virtue of their siting or



architectural quality, will have only primary elevations. These offer the greatest challenge to design for re-use. Very rarely it may be appropriate to insert a new opening on a primary elevation, but this is only acceptable if it can be done without any effect on the perceived character of the building.

**2.7. NOTE 7: Any changes to elevations that are private and without architectural interest (the secondary elevations) should be modest in scale and should be in character with the building as a whole.**

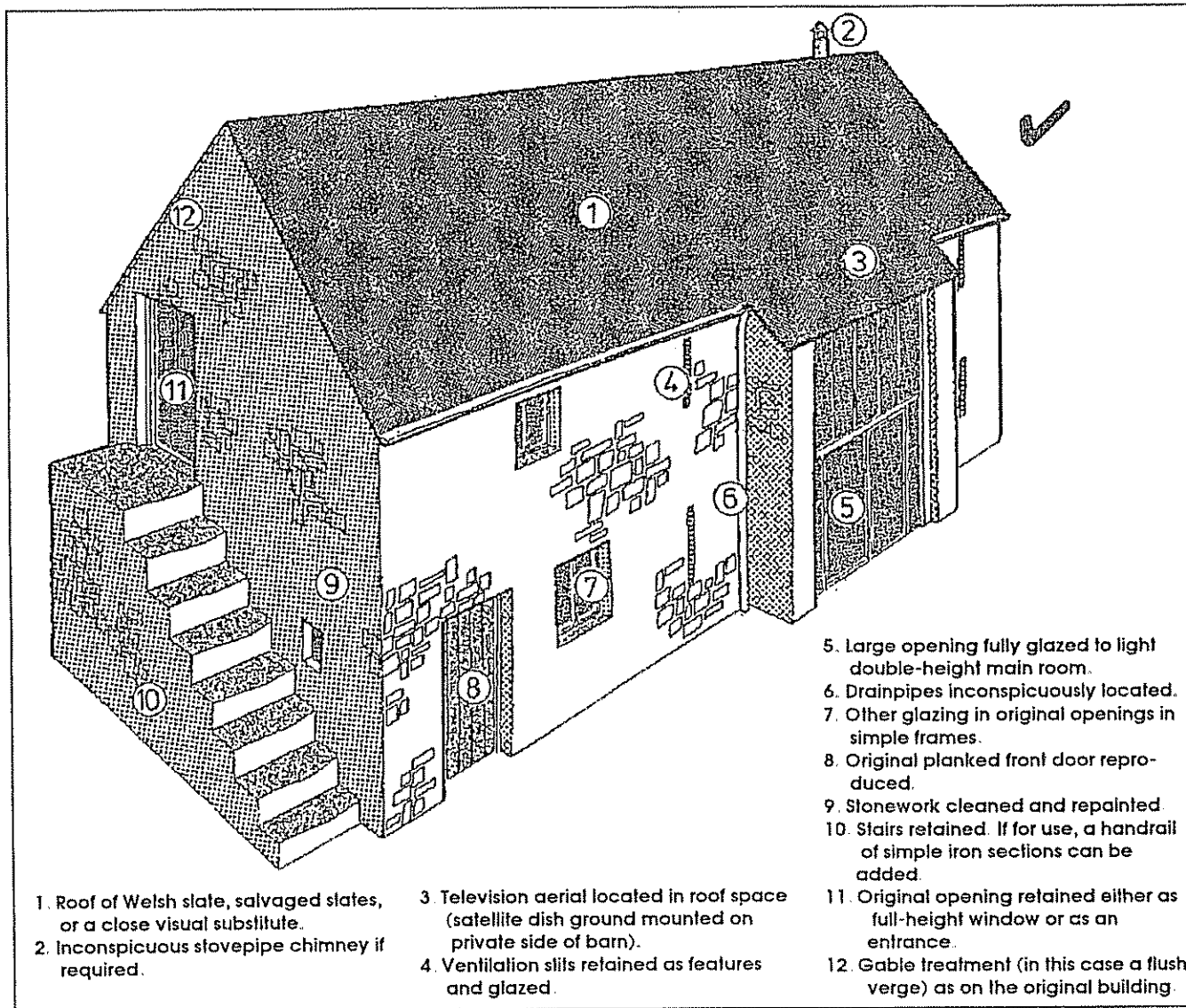
2.7.1. Secondary elevations, because they are not part of the public face of the building and have no intrinsic architectural interest, offer some opportunity to create new openings to compen-

safe for the constraints of the primary elevations. New windows and doors, of course, should be compatible with the general style of the building because both sides of the building will be seen by the owner and his guests, if by no-one else.

**2.8. NOTE 8: Material finishes should preserve or enhance the original character of the building.**

2.8.1. Generally, the original roofing and walling materials should be retained and repaired. Typical materials in the Borough are rubble stone walls and slate roofs. If the stone has been rendered or whitewashed, these finishes should be reinstated (using walling paint as a more durable alternative to whitewash) as they are part of the building's character. Man-made alternatives to





slate can be an appropriate roofing material provided they are very close in appearance to slate. Concrete tiles are, however, usually unsuitable because of their thickness and texture.

**2.9. NOTE 9: Details of the conversion should preserve or enhance the original character of the buildings.**

2.9.1. Existing details of the roof should be respected. Details of the gable in particular are significant components of a farm building's character. Gables finished with a parapet or coping, or a flush verge, or a closely fitting barge board, should not be replaced with the modern detail of a widely overhanging verge and deep barge board. Similarly, eaves detailing should respect the existing character rather than

being finished with assertive modern box fascias.

2.9.2. Window frames should be carefully chosen to respect the character of the building. As the openings in farm buildings are often unglazed and have only boarded shutters and doors, simple dark framed windows are often the best choice: they have the character of empty voids in the facade. Large cart doors are best fully glazed with a dark frame, again in order to emphasise their shape and scale. By careful design it may even be possible to retain the original doors as outward hinged shutters than can provide privacy, security, and heat retention at night.

2.9.3. Roof lights, if they are needed, should not be located on roof-slopes that are publicly visible,

where they will detract from the form of the building.

2.9.4. Chimneys are rarely found on old farm buildings. Where they are, they should be kept; but if there is no chimney the addition of an assertive brick or stone chimney will weaken the character. If a chimney is required, a black stovepipe with a simple cowl sited on a secondary roof slope is far more appropriate.

**3.10. NOTE 10: Any signage associated with the new use should be so designed and placed as not to detract from the character of the building.**

2.10.1. For those uses which require advertising (craft workshops, studios etc.) the greatest care should be taken in the design, materials and location of any

Existing gable details should be retained and restored.

1. Coped Gable
2. Gable with parapet.
3. Flush verge.
4. Plain barge board.

The relationship between walls and roofs should not be changed by introducing modern widely overhanging verges.

5. Original detail.
6. Unacceptable detail.

Good dressed stonework should be retained.

7. Dressed quoin stones.
8. Segmental arch with decorated keystone

Features of character and interest should be preserved.

9. Good roof timbers.
10. Dovecote in gable.
11. Tethering ring for horse or pony.
12. Dog kennel beneath external stair.

Note 9

signs. Simple, traditional materials, such as wood, paint and iron, are to be preferred to glossy plastic and lightweight uncoated aluminium. Signwriting on windows, letters fixed individually to the wall, or discreet free-standing signs are often better than large board signs fixed to the farm building itself.

**2.11. NOTE 11: The setting of the converted building should retain its original rural character.**

2.11.1. A clutter of car ports, garden sheds and washing lines will ruin the effect of the most sensitively designed building. Even neatly clipped Lawson Cypress hedges, trimmed lawns, and cosy flower beds can introduce an unfortunate suburban note into the countryside.

2.11.2. Every effort should be made, at least on the public side of a converted building, to recreate the appearance of farmyard or countryside by the use of stone paving, the retention of farm walls and gates, and a deliberate roughness in the planting and management of grasses and wild flowers.

**2.12. NOTE 12: Care should be taken to avoid disturbance to wildlife protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.**

2.12.1. Disused farm buildings may provide a home for protected species such as bats or barn owls. If it is suspected that a proposed conversion will affect such a building it is important that specialist advice be obtained, in order to prevent or minimise the disturbance of the wildlife.

**2.13. NOTE 13: Where practicable, proposals for farm building conversions should incorporate nesting facilities for barn owls.**

2.13.1. In recent years the number of barn owls has seriously declined because of the loss of their nesting sites in traditional farm buildings. The re-creation of nesting sites may help to reverse that decline and so maintain the richness and diversity of countryside wildlife.

### 3. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

3.1. The Development Plan for Ogwr incorporates the relevant policies of the Mid Glamorgan County Structure Plan and the policies of the Ogwr Borough Local Plan. Both documents have specific policies relating to the conversion of redundant farm buildings

3.2. The County Structure Plan incorporating Approved Structure Plan Alterations No.1 became operational on the 12th. September 1989. The relevant policy is No. S3 part 1, which states:

*"There will be a presumption against:-*

*1. Development in the open countryside unless it is necessary in the interests of agriculture or forestry, except for the conversion of suitable redundant buildings to private residential or tourist accommodation or business uses (class B1) where:-*

*(A) The existing building is structurally sound or capable of being made so without major external alterations or reconstruction, the proposed use is compatible with surrounding land uses and satisfactory provision for services, access and parking can be made.*

*(B) The building is part of a group and is constructed of materials and in a style compatible with buildings traditional to the*

*countryside in that locality prior to 1914. Only in exceptional circumstances will conversion of an isolated building, or one built since 1914, be considered.*

*(C) The character and design of the building is respected (particularly if it has historic or architectural merit) and it is in scale and sympathy with the surrounding landscape."*

3.3. Ogwr Borough Local Plan has passed through its deposit stage and will be the subject of a public local inquiry commencing on the 8th. March 1994. The relevant Local Plan policy is No.EV6, which states:

*"The conversion of buildings in the countryside will normally be permitted only where all of the following criteria apply:-*

*(1) The existing building is structurally sound or capable of being made so without major external alterations or reconstruction.*

*(2) The proposed use is sympathetic to the rural character and satisfactory provision for services, access and parking can be made.*

*(3) The form, bulk, and design of the converted building, as well as the materials used, are in keeping with its surroundings.*

*(4) The character and design of the building are respected if it has architectural, historic, or group value."*

## 4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Borough Council publishes a leaflet "Notes for Applicants" intended to assist the making of a planning application. The following checklist adds to those notes with particular reference to applications for the conversion of redundant farm buildings.

To minimise any delay in the consideration of a planning application the following should be included:

**1** Four copies of the completed planning application form (Forms available from the Council Offices)

**2** One copy of the correct Certificate under Article 12A of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988.

**3** The correct fee. (A guide to the current fee for different types of application is available from the Council Offices).

**4** Four copies of a plan (not less than 1:2500 scale) showing the location of the application site. The site should be shaded or outlined in RED. Any adjoining land owned or controlled by the applicant should be shown in BLUE.

**5** Four copies of a site plan (not less than 1:500; scales of 1:200 or 1:100 are recommended for single dwellings). This plan should show features of the site, including trees, existing and proposed means of site enclosure, landscaping, the existing and proposed access, and the location of the building.

**6** Four copies of plans and elevations of the existing building (not less than 1:100 scale). In many cases a cross-section to the same scale will be needed to show the available headroom.

**7** Four copies of plans, elevations and cross-section of the building as proposed (not less than 1:100 scale). Details should be given of the materials and colour of external finishes.

**8** One copy of a structural survey of the building, or a statement by a relevant professional confirming that the building is structurally sound, or capable of being made so without major external alterations or reconstruction.

**NOTE:** Plans should be signed by the applicant or his agent. All duplicates should be true copies of the original.

Plans are open to public inspection. Applicants are not, however, required to disclose any proposed security arrangements. If a farm building is listed, or is within the curtilage of a listed building, listed building consent will be needed for its conversion. In addition to planning permission."

## 5. FURTHER INFORMATION

5.1. These notes can only offer general advice. If it is not clear how the advice notes apply to a particular farm building the proposal may be discussed with staff of the Borough Planning Department. Letters should be addressed to:

**Mr. N. A. McGaw B.Sc., MRTPI,  
The Borough Planning Officer, Ogwr Borough Council,  
P.O. Box 4, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, Mid  
Glamorgan. CF31 1LX.**

If telephoning, ring Bridgend (0656) 643643 and ask for the Planning (Development Control) Section. The Design Guide reference to quote is **DG.4**.

5.2. Specific advice relating to barn owls can be obtained from:

**The Hawk and Owl Trust, C/O Zoological Society of  
London, Regent's Park, London. NW1 4RY.**

5.3. General advice on wildlife can be obtained from:

**Glamorgan Wildlife Trust, Fountain Road, Tondu, Bridgend,  
Mid Glamorgan. CF32 0EH.**