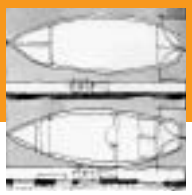
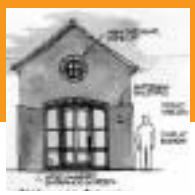
Broads Authority

Broads Design & Management Information





Building at the Waterside

A guide to design of waterside buildings in the Broads Authority area.

The rules and regulations governing planning permission can seem like a minefield to some people. We have produced this series of leaflets to help everyone living and running businesses within the Broads Authority area. We aim to set out the basic rules and principles of planning permission in easy-to-understand terms.

Regulations governing building work in the Broads are different because the area is designated a National Park. That means planning rules are sometimes stricter to help us all preserve our unique environment and keep it special. Proposals needing planning permission are judged against all the policies of the Local Plan which is available from your local planning office.

We hope that these leaflets will help you to develop plans which will be accepted - this saves you, and us, time and money. But leaflets cannot cover everything and are no substitute for personal advice on your individual circumstances, so it is vital that you check with your local planning office well in advance of starting work.

How to keep the Broads special

- scale
- form
- proportion
- colour
- sustainability
- materials
- detail

A living and working landscape

Buildings in the Broads reflect the activities of people living and working here. The importance of the waterways, with their associated trades and activities dominates. Many villages are centred around their staithe (mooring place), with prominent buildings constructed with materials carried by water.
The design of these buildings reflects their special functions whether connected with riverside trade or management of the land.

Boatsheds, drainage mills, riverside chalets and marshmen's cottages are all typical of the Broads. Their simple construction, often out of lightweight materials, is suitable for the marshy ground conditions. The result is a scale and type of building which blends with the natural surroundings in a way that some new developments do not.

Good design is crucial in protected landscapes like the Broads. Development needs to take account of the characteristics of the site as well as what is distinctive in the wider Broads setting. But good design is all the harder to define in the Broads because of the varied nature of the local architecture.

Unlike, for example, the Yorkshire Dales with its distinctive local stone, buildings in the Broads vary throughout the area. Here we find small, neat, weather-boarded waterside chalets, grand riverside homes with sweeping gardens and villages of brick and thatch. What is right for Potter Heigham is not necessarily right for Horning or Oulton Broad.

As the local planning authority, the Broads Authority can influence design to help a building be absorbed more easily into the landscape. But it's not just about looking back, we want to look forward as well. Balance is the key, as with all aspects of the Broads Authority's work. The past gives us the context, but we welcome innovative and modern design as well as more traditional styles. Scale, form and the materials used are particularly important. We hope that this series of advice leaflets will help generate development proposals to keep the Broads special.

DESIGN FUNDAMENTALS

Scale

New buildings in the Broads are often criticised because they are out of scale with their surroundings. This can be caused by economic pressures outweighing the importance of good design, particularly on valuable riverside plots. There is also a desire for bigger and better accommodation both for homes and commercial premises. Another reason is that the raising of floor levels, to counteract flooding, can affect the scale of buildings.

Points to Remember

- Drawings should show how the new building fits in with its surroundings so the scale can be seen before building starts. For large developments a scale model or photomontages may also be needed.
- You may have to compromise on the size and level of accommodation in order to have a development appropriate to the site.
- Take into account that you may need to raise floor levels to counter the risk of Flooding 1 (see the Broads Authority's Supplementary Planning Guidance on Development and Flood Risks). Bear in mind regulations will need to be taken into account regarding wheelchair access.

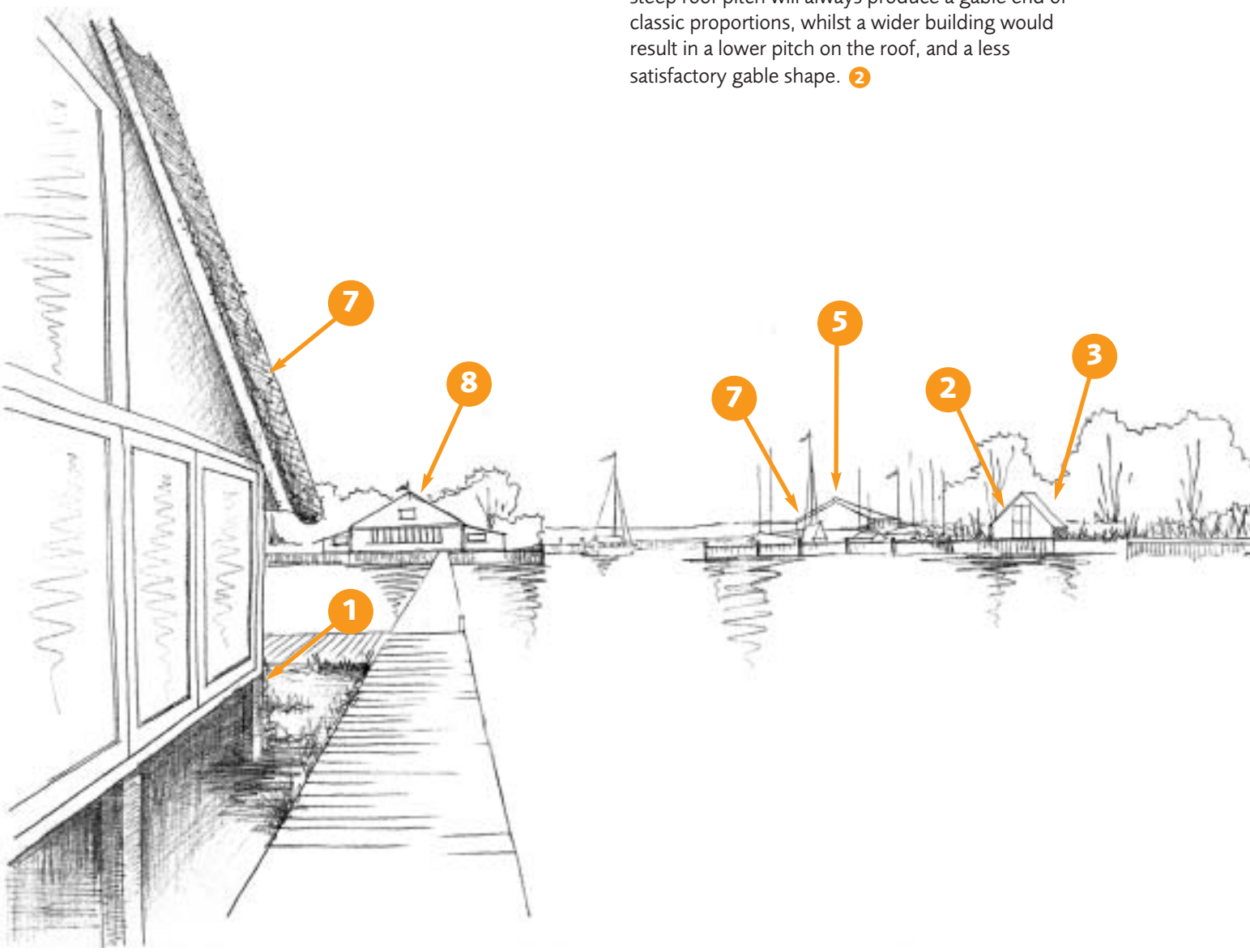
Form

The general form of waterside buildings relates directly to their function. Often they have a basic style with little ornamentation, fussiness or striving for effect. Instead they rely on the use of simple framed structures, good proportions, a roof surface usually dominant over the walls, and traditional materials that are sympathetic to their surroundings.

The form of buildings in the Broads varies according to the overall character of the area. So while a spacious house on a large plot may fit well in villages like Horning or Wroxham, at Brundall and Martham cabin-like buildings are more appropriate. This needs to be taken into account when planning any building.

Points to Remember

- Look around at the older buildings nearby to see how they were designed and built.
- Simplicity of structure, good proportions, symmetry and appropriate scale are more important than passing fashion trends.
- Layout of the floor plan also affects the form of the building - a narrow rectangular-shaped plan with a steep roof pitch will always produce a gable end of classic proportions, whilst a wider building would result in a lower pitch on the roof, and a less satisfactory gable shape. 2



Proportion

On waterside buildings the relationship between walls and roof is visually important. This goes back to the time when thatched roofs were common and required a steep pitch and large overhanging eaves in order to keep the water away from the building. This produced roofs that dominated walls, but they were also in harmony with their surroundings. It is still true today that roofs, not only those made of thatch, tend to merge more easily into the landscape when designed in a similar way.

The proportional relationships of walls to windows and doors is also important. Don't get so wrapped up in the internal layout of the building that you forget how it will look from the outside. Generally windows, particularly picture windows and patio doors, should be kept as small as possible while still meeting Building Regulations.

Points to Remember

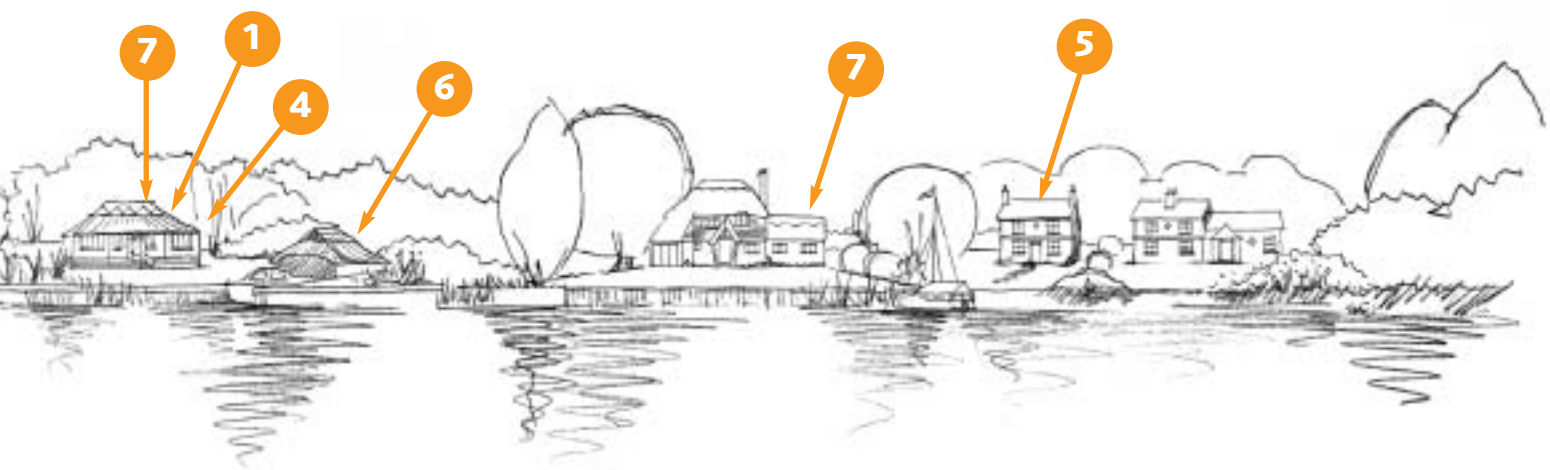
- It is generally better for roofs to be proportionately larger than walls, as roofs tend to merge more easily into the landscape. 3
- Individual windows have better proportions when they are narrow, rather than wide. Even if windows have a horizontal shape, they should be divided into narrow, vertical panes. 4
- Where sizes and shapes of windows and doors are different to others for practical reasons, make sure they relate in height or overall proportions. 5

Colour

In most areas of the Broads, the colour of undecorated local materials like brick, pantile and thatch forms the basis of building colour. This has been supplemented by the colour of protective treatments like grey galvanising and red lead on steel and black pitch coatings on timber. These are now so widespread that they have become part of the local distinctive style. With increased development and a much greater choice of colours, the subjective use of colour has become an issue. Bright or discordant colours can damage a setting, so we all need to be aware of the effect of colours on the landscape.

Points to Remember

- To blend a building into a landscape, or to reduce the visual impact of a building, choose the muted greens and browns of the landscape, together with the neutral colours of grey and black.
- Where merging with the landscape is difficult - such as when a building stands out against the sky - dark, recessive colours give some camouflage.
- Contrasts between building and sky can sometimes be more appropriate, especially in an otherwise monotonous landscape.
- Brighter colours can be used in more built up areas to create variety.



Sustainability

As well as encouraging local distinctiveness and contemporary design, new buildings in the Broads should try to incorporate sustainable practices into their designs, their methods of construction, and their current and future uses. Sustainable and innovative design can reflect the continuing vitality and environmental importance of the Broads. Applications for Planning Permission will be assessed for their overall contribution to the environment, as well as their local functional and visual impact.

Although legislation exists on technical aspects of the design of buildings, increasingly the Broads Authority will also be looking for sustainable features that demonstrate:

- The efficient use of energy for heating, water and lighting systems.
- Energy strategies which include the building's relationship with microclimate, use of renewable energy sources, effective use of daylighting, and thermal performance of the fabric.
- Rainwater collection systems, and other water economy measures.
- Use of materials that can be recycled, or easily disposed.
- Avoiding materials that are bad for your health.
- Minimal use of materials from non-renewable sources, and designs that reduce demand on all natural resources.
- Consideration of possible alternative uses for buildings and ultimately their ease of disposal when redundant.

Materials

Because riverside buildings are often built on marshy sites, they have traditionally been built of light-weight materials and it is these materials that we encourage today to harmonise with the local character.

These lightweight framed structures, as well as being traditional and distinctive to the Broads, can readily utilise new technology and innovative materials to produce contemporary buildings that look to the future.

It's worth remembering that the materials used also influence the form of a building (see the section on 'Form' for more guidance) for example, the steep pitch required on a thatched cottage will determine its profile.

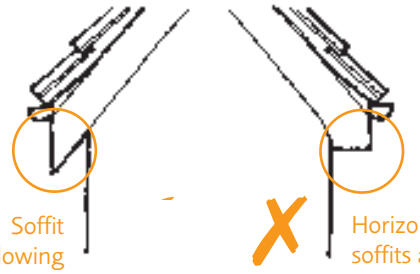
Points to Remember

- Timber frame is the most appropriate type of construction for smaller buildings in waterside areas, and steel structural frames for larger buildings. 6
- Wall claddings tend to be of timber boards, metal or fibre-cement based sheets.
- Roofs tend to be thatched or corrugated metal. 7 Slates made of composite material in grey, black or red were introduced early in the last century and remain a good alternative.
- Materials such as PVCu windows and doors and steel imitation pantiles are generally regarded as inappropriate.
- Although the range of materials can seem small, there are lots of varieties within the range - for example, wide, rough-sawn feather-edge boards have a rustic appearance, while narrow-planed ship-lap boards are more suitable for domestic environments.
- While the small range of materials allows a definite consistency of style, it does not restrict building designs, which can be varied in form, detail and colour.

Detail

Details on a building have a considerable effect on its overall appearance. The amount of roof overhang at eaves and gables, the treatment of fascias and barge-boards, and the material and shape of gutters and rainwater pipes all need careful consideration to achieve a harmonious building.

The unfussy use of traditional materials is the key to good detailing. There is no need to make a building more complicated than necessary if it has simple detailing using good quality materials.

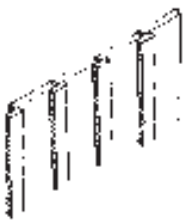


Soffit following underside of rafters

✗ Horizontal soffits are not traditional in the Broads

Points to Remember

- Doors and windows should be made of consistent materials which age and weather at the same rate as the rest of the building - PVCu is normally not appropriate.
- Homes tend to have small side-hung windows with the emphasis on vertical panes of glass.
- Large patio doors with side lights will spoil the look of your traditional dwelling.
- Commercial premises, especially boatsheds have long bands of windows along the building separating the roof from the walls. 8
- Look at the finish, treatment and detailing of wall cladding, choosing a more rustic style for rural settings and a more sophisticated style in built-up areas.
- Steel or aluminium cladding on commercial buildings should be selected according to the scale of the building - deep profiles give texture to larger industrial sheds, while shallow profiles give enough texture and character to smaller buildings, without looking too heavy. Curved profiles are encouraged.

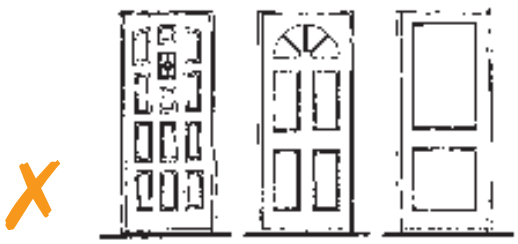


vertical board and batten

sawn featheredge boarding - often used on boat-houses, boatsheds and non-residential buildings

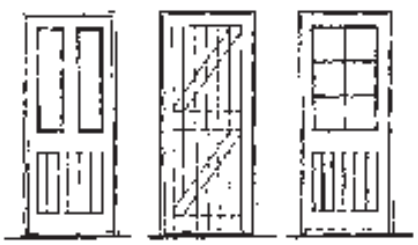
planed shiplap boarding - more usually used on domestic buildings

✗ Many off the peg windows are poorly proportioned and unbalanced for use in the Broads waterside



✗ Doors like this look over-fussy or poorly proportioned when used on the Broads waterside

✓ More traditionally proportioned windows are available



✓ Designs which are simple and have a link to local tradition

Professional advice

You will find it helpful to get professional advice from an experienced Architect or designer. As well as understanding the design requirements of waterside buildings in the Broads area, such a professional can guide you through the complex procedures of Planning and Building Regulations. Don't forget, it's in your interests to submit a well-presented planning application with good quality and accurate plans and drawings, and enough background information so your proposals can be assessed. It's also important that the drawings should show the proposals in their setting, with adjoining or adjacent buildings where applicable. See our other leaflets on planning permission for more details.

This leaflet expands on the Broads Authority's design policies which are published in the Broads Local Plan. Proposals needing planning permission are judged against all the policies of the Local Plan.

Remember

- Check with your Local Planning Office to see if permission is required well in advance of starting work.
- Make it clear that you live in a Broads Authority area.
- Guidance at the outset can prevent unsuccessful applications which are time-consuming and costly.
- You can be told to put matters right if you don't get planning permission when you need to. You might even have to remove unauthorised buildings.

If you require the services of an architect, please contact the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) at www.riba.org tel: 0207 580 5533 or the local branches at www.norfolkarchitects.org and www. suffolkarchitects.org.

We want your views on these information leaflets. Please send your comments to the address above by December 2004.

These information leaflets are also available in large print. To obtain copies please telephone 01603 610734

Contact your local planning office at:

Planning Control
Broadland District Council
Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road,
Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0DU
tel: 01603 431133
email: planning.controleast@broadland.gov.uk
www.broadland.gov.uk

Planning and Development Department
Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Maltings House, Malthouse Lane,
Gorleston NR31 0GY
tel: 01493-856100
email: plan@great-yarmouth.gov.uk
www.great-yarmouth.gov.uk

Planning Department
North Norfolk District Council
PO Box 5, Council Offices, Holt Road,
Cromer NR27 9DZ
tel: 01263 516150
email: planning@north-norfolk.gov.uk
www.north-norfolk.gov.uk

Planning and Architectural Services
Norwich City Council
City Hall, Norwich NR2 1NH
tel: 01603 513811
email: stuartorrin@norwich.gov.uk
www.norwich.gov.uk

Planning Department
South Norfolk Council
South Norfolk House, Swan Lane,
Long Stratton, Norwich NR15 2XE
tel 01508 533846
email: planning@s-norfolk.gov.uk
www.south-norfolk.gov.uk

Planning Department
Waveney District Council
Rectory Road, Lowestoft,
Suffolk NR33 0BX
tel: 01502 523050
www.waveney.gov.uk

These offices work alongside the Broads Authority and will be able to give you all the help and information you need.

Other useful leaflets:
Introduction to planning series

Design Guidance Leaflets eg Waterside residential buildings or Waterside commercial buildings

Materials Source List