3.4
How to add Character and Detail

Carefully position service features on buildings

Wherever possible, external service pipes and other apparatus should be grouped together and discretely located on elevations which are not prominent. This requires careful consideration of the provision of all services at the initial design stage.

Use appropriate rainwater goods

Rainwater goods are important for ensuring the future maintenance of a building, however they can also enhance or undermine its appearance. The choice of materials should be taken with care in sensitive locations such as conservation areas, where painted metal rainwater goods are most appropriate. On contemporary buildings, a more creative approach to design and materials may be acceptable. Rainwater goods should be located as unobtrusively as possible and discretely coloured to reduce their visual impact.

Materials

The appearance of buildings and their impact on the character of an area is greatly influenced by the type and quality of materials used. In larger residential developments there is a significant risk that too limited a range of materials can result in a lack of visual interest in the streetscene, whilst the use of too many materials can result in visual confusion.

Use locally appropriate materials
Source materials as locally as possible

The most successful approach is to use a range of materials that match or complement materials used locally. There is the opportunity to use innovative materials in stand-alone buildings, although this needs to be fully justified in the Design and Access Statement accompanying the planning application.

311 Highly reflective metal flues

312 Unsightly exposed services

313 Traditional refurbished metal guttering

314 Modern metal guttering designed into the building

315 A rich variety of building materials in the Vale

3.4
How to add Character and Detail

In all developments the use of local natural materials will be encouraged.

Walling Materials

Historically, the choice of wall materials in the Vale was largely dictated by those materials that could be sourced locally, and this largely comprised brick and stone for walls. In more recent times the range of materials has broadened. Image 315 illustrates some of the materials used across the Vale, and the following section describes these materials in more detail.

Stone

The most predominant walling material is stone.

The types of stone apparent in the Vale are:

Rubble: Local limestone or Sarsen stones of irregular sizes.

Ashlar: Dressed limestone and chalk.

Image 316 (right) illustrates the use of stone in the Vale, including the construction techniques.

Masonry
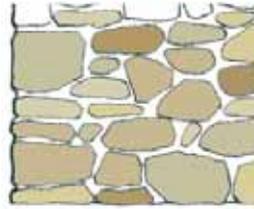
Random rubble: No courses of stone.
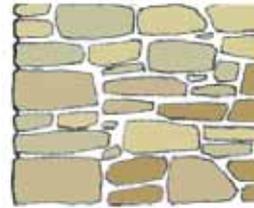
Coursed rubble: Using irregular shaped stones but brought together to make courses at intervals.
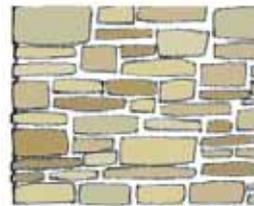
Regular or Squared Coursed Rubble: Regular shaped stones brought together to make courses at intervals
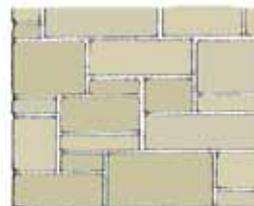
Random Ashlar: Random sized ashlar blocks uncoursed - often seen in chalk buildings

Regular Coursed Ashlar: Regular shaped blocks having the same height in each course, but not the same height throughout - often seen in Victorian Villas
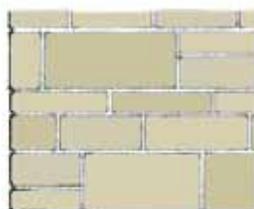
Broken rangework: Consists of squared stones laid in courses of varying height and often broken at intervals into two or three separate courses.
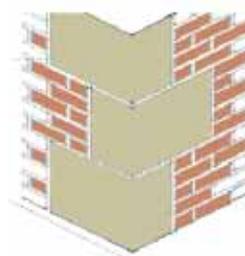
Quoin: Forms the corner angle of the wall either brick or masonry and can occur on a variety of different contrasting facades including rendered.

316 **Masonry in the Vale**

3.4
How to add Character and Detail

Brick

The predominant colour of brick in the District is orange/red. However, other colours such as blue, buff or yellow bricks are mainly used for decoration. The choice of brick, particularly its colour and texture, should respect the bricks used in the local area. Dark red and dark brown bricks are not appropriate for most new developments in the Vale.

A variety of brick bonds and detailing (e.g. Flemish Bond with blue or glazed headers) can be found in the Vale – these are shown below. Much of the decorative brickwork is found in the eastern Vale, in Character Zones 2B, 2C and 3.

Contrasting brickwork between and window detailing is common

Herringbone patterns are often found in medieval timber framed properties and modern copies. They can take on a number of forms such as vertical, horizontal or basketweave. Sometimes a mix of forms can be seen on the same property

Dentil courses and dentilation around the gable where there is a regular pattern of projecting headers with a projecting course of stretchers above and below. Dog toothing is also found, brick projects at a 45° angle to give pointed appearance

Decorative bands of brickwork are usually found on Victorian properties and are difficult to replicate successfully on new dwellings. On traditional extensions however, the pattern should be continued.

317 Brick detailing found in the Vale

Brickwork
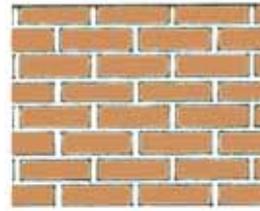
Running or Stretcher Bond: A bond composed of overlapping stretchers. Often found on modern mass produced housing.
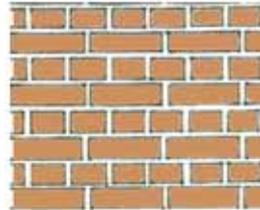
English Bond: Alternating courses of stretchers and headers.
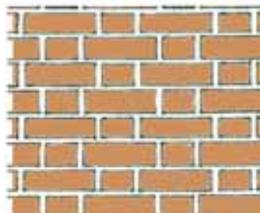
Flemish Bond: Alternating headers and stretchers in same course. Very popular, particularly in the eastern half of the Vale.
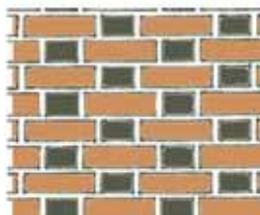
Flemish Bond with blue bricks or flared/ glazed headers is another frequently found alternative especially in Zones 2C and 3. Rarely it is seen with Gault bricks
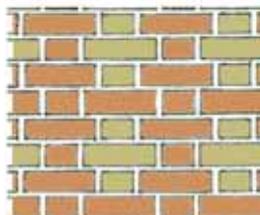
Cross or Flemish: Cross bond is very occasionally seen and only in decorative Victorian properties found in Zone 2c and uses Gault bricks
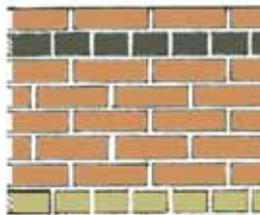
Common or Scottish Bond: With one course of headers and five courses of stretchers is rarely seen.
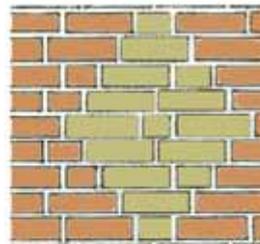
Diaper work of many different patterns ranging from diamonds to crosses and numbers is prominent in different brick colours and sometimes is honeycombed where ventilation is required, such as barns

318 Materials and construction techniques for brick in the Vale

3.4 How to add Character and Detail

Lime or Colour Washed Render

Traditionally, most render is lime based over stone infill, or lathe and plaster in timber framing. The use of render on new buildings needs careful handling as the hard, smooth finish contrasts with the soft appearance of traditional lime render. Therefore, care needs to be taken when using render in conservation areas and other historic locations.

Weatherboarding

Weatherboarding is relatively limited in the Vale and is generally confined to agricultural buildings which have been converted to residential use. Weatherboarding should normally either be stained black or left to fade naturally over time. Red based or "pine" stains are not appropriate. In less sensitive locations, the painting of weatherboarding may be acceptable.

Tile Hanging

Tile hanging in the Vale is mainly found in Blewbury, the estate villages of Ardington and Lockinge and on some Victorian brick terraces and villas in Wantage. The appropriate use of tile hanging on new buildings can add variety and interest.

Timber Framing

Timber framing is most prominent in the southeast of the Vale, particularly in Harwell, East Hendred, Steventon and Blewbury. Buildings were usually built in a series of bays, usually two or three, often of different widths. The same principle is still used for modern timber outbuildings, as illustrated by the cart shed shown in image 319.

It is important to understand the traditional techniques of timber framing, so this can be taken into account in the design of extensions to traditional timber framed buildings.

Types of Timber Framing

319 Modern cartshed garage using bay construction

320 Cruck Frame examples: Harwell

Types of Timber Panelling

321 Example of close studding

322 Decorative pattern framing is rare. This Steventon example is one of few found

323 Square panelling, with tension braces. A jettied first floor projects over

3.4
How to add Character and Detail

Use appropriate materials and techniques for extensions to timber framed buildings

A mix of modern and traditional materials within a timber frame can be appropriate and allows for greater innovation in design.

Ensure timber framed outbuildings are subordinate to the dwelling

Timber framed outbuildings, such as cartsheds, home offices and workshops are particularly appropriate in the more rural parts of the Vale. It is important, however, to ensure that their size is subordinate to the dwelling.

Roofing Materials

As with walling materials, historically, roof coverings were dictated by the materials that could be sourced locally. A wider range of materials became available with the arrival of the canal and the railway. Images 329 to 335 illustrate some of the roofing materials used across the Vale.

Plain clay tiles

Clay tiles came from local brickworks and have a distinctive orange/red colour. The choice of tiles, particularly their colour and texture, should respect the tiles used in the local area.

Stone Slates

Stone slates were sourced from local quarries which are now all closed. A number of quarries elsewhere still operate which can provide a suitable supply of slates. Slates should be laid in diminishing courses from ridge to eaves.

Some good quality artificial stone slates are available and can be used in appropriate locations, but natural stone slates will need to be used on listed buildings.

324 A modern extension and renovation.

325 A new timber framed building for one damaged by fire

326 Brick and timber framed construction with a mix facing materials

327 Timber framed replacement dwelling with a mix materials

328 Conversion of granary to home office

329 Modern Plain clay tiles

330 Original Plain clay tiles

3.4
How to add Character and Detail

Blue Slates

Blue slates are used throughout the Vale. Although they do not tend to be the predominant roofing material in any particular area, they are most commonly used on Victorian terraces and villas. The use of blue slates in a new development will need to be considered within the context provided by existing buildings in the local area.

Thatch

There are three major thatching materials:

Long straw is wheat straw grown specifically for the thatching industry.

Combed wheat has a smoother, curved finish compared to long straw.

Water reed is grown in reed beds, along rivers and estuaries and gives a crisp, angular appearance.

Traditionally, properties in the Vale are thatched in long straw, with simple undecorated ridges. Water reed should not be used on listed buildings.

Means of Enclosure

Boundary treatments are important both to maintain privacy and to demarcate the change from public to private space.

Use boundary treatments that reflect local traditions

The following section considers the use of walls, fencing and railings – the use of hedges is set out in section 3.5.

331 Artificial stone slates must be of high quality

332 Stone slates can be sourced from a number of quarries

333 Slate with decorative ridge

334 Thatch

335 Thatching in progress

3.4
How to add Character and Detail

Walls

The location of the site should determine which materials are chosen to construct a wall. The material used can help to reinforce local identity. The colour of the mortar and type pointing should reflect local traditions.

Cap walls in accordance with the local building tradition

On all walls, irrespective of material, the coping is an important detail. In the Vale, there are various styles of coping, both in stone and brick.

In historic areas, brick walls often include half round coping bricks, and some walls have a simple stone coping.

Image 337 (right) illustrates some of the most common coping for stone walls in the Vale.

Fencing

Close-boarded or panel fencing is not considered appropriate in prominent locations, such as road frontages.

Simple post and rail and picket fencing is usually most appropriate in village and other rural locations.

Railings

Railings can successfully provide enclosure, whilst allowing views into and out of a site and preventing any loss of light. Designs should be in keeping with the character of the local area and should not be unduly ornate or elaborate.

336 **Examples of the variety walls and materials used**

Random upright stones

Buck and Doe or Cock and Hen

Level Regular

Rubble

Mortar semicircular

Mortar triangular

Mortar half hexagonal

Mortar extended semicircular
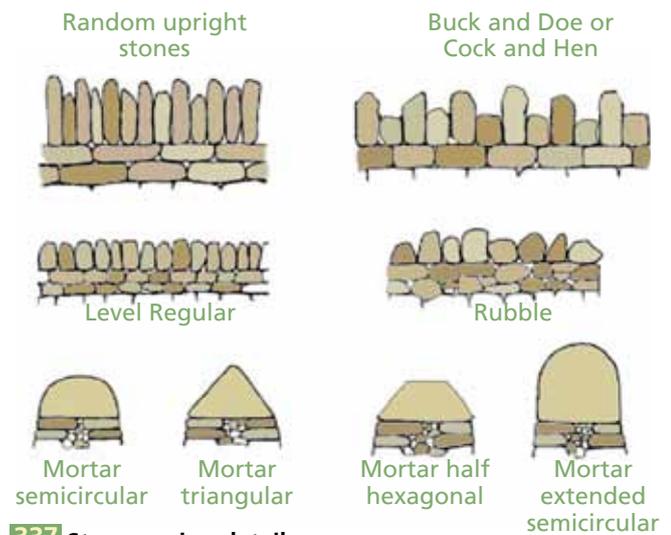
337 **Stone coping details**

338 **Hedge & picket fence**

Garages and Ancillary Buildings

Garages, cycle stores and bin stores are a feature of modern living, and should be included as an integral part of the overall design from the outset. If poorly designed, they can be difficult to use and detract from the appearance of a development.

Design outbuildings to be subordinate to the dwellings

Garages can either be integrated into dwellings or provided as separate units. Single garages should have internal dimensions of 6 x 3 metres to ensure sufficient space for keeping cycles or for storage purposes.

Sufficient covered external space should be provided to house containers for refuse and recycling. Such structures need to be conveniently located for residents and accessible for refuse collection vehicles.

Additional information regarding garages, car ports, cycle storage and bin storage is provided at Section 3.2 above.
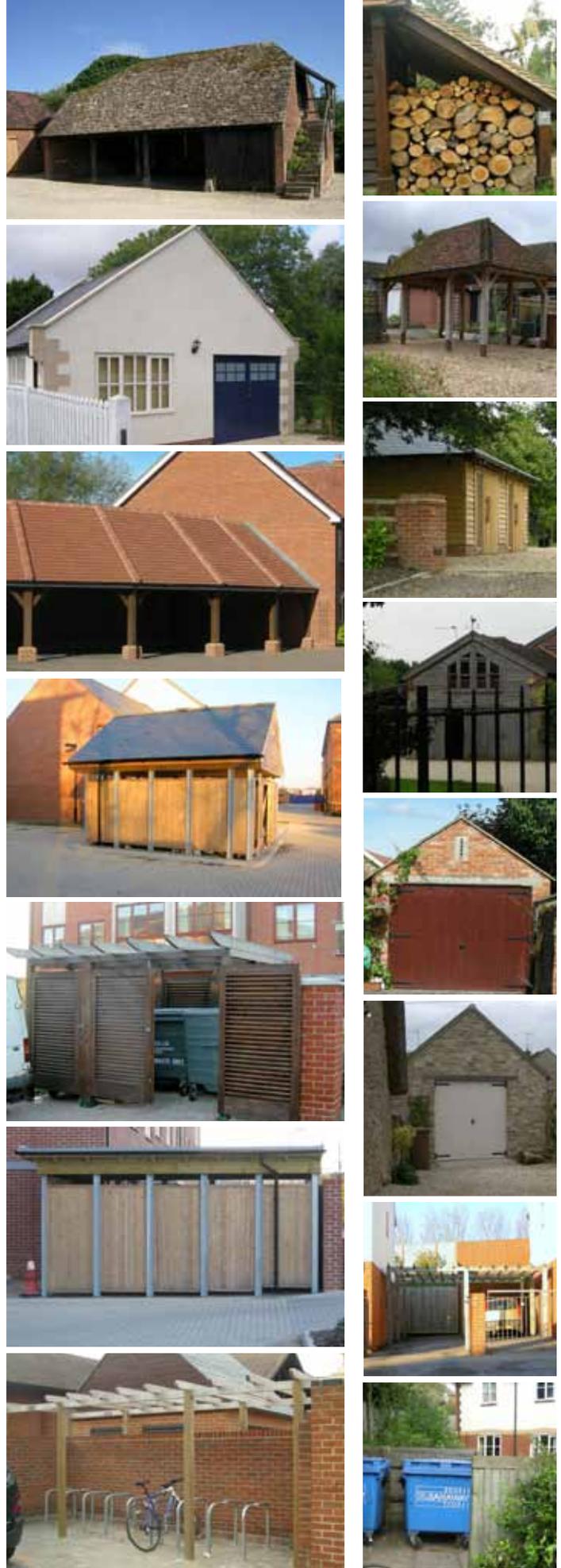
339 Good examples of garages, cycle parking and bin storage

3.5
How to Create Character with Landscaping

Landscape Setting

Proposals for new residential development should be designed within the context of the existing landscape.

Rural

The rural landscape includes isolated dwellings, country estates and small groups of dwellings such as hamlets and farm buildings.

In these locations, the buildings are secondary to the landscape.

In rural areas, landscape is the dominant feature

Urban

The urban environment includes towns and villages where the buildings are the dominant feature and the landscaping is secondary and complementary.

In urban areas, buildings are dominant and contain the urban spaces

The urban townscape contains large blocks of closely-knit buildings, with boundary walls, railings and gates and hard surface treatments of roads, driveways and footpaths making an important contribution to the definition of spaces and the character of an area.

The Vale's villages and hamlets usually have a loose-knit form, with prominent gaps between buildings. These gaps often become an intrinsic part of the character of the village.

Landscaping can enhance the character of urban areas – small groups of trees or individual mature specimens can take on a particular significance.

340 Rural landscape: farm buildings such as found in Goosey

341 Arcadian development such as Boars Hill and Cumnor Hill

342 Urban/rural edge such as Ardington

343 Medium density village core such as Great Coxwell

344 High density urban core such as Abingdon

3.5
How to Create Character with Landscaping

Suburban

In suburban areas, the buildings are usually loosely arranged, with neither landscaping or buildings dominating. Suburban areas tend to be dominated by the needs of the private car, which can result in an uncomfortable lack of enclosure.

345 **Example of unsuccessful sub-urban townscape**

It should be noted that there are examples of successful suburbs in the UK – e.g. garden suburbs. The success of these areas largely depends on landscaping being the dominant feature.

Landscape Design

The landscape design for a site should take into existing landscape features and the potential to integrate the site into existing and proposed open spaces.

Existing Features

A full site appraisal should be undertaken to highlight the important trees, hedgerows and other landscape features.

Make the most of existing landscape features

Landscape features such as trees, hedgerows and the site's topography should be seen as an opportunity to add character to a development.

Existing hedgerows and trees can be used to line a new road or footpath, ponds can be used as focal features and groups of trees can be used as

346 **Arcadian landscape**

347 **Landscaping should be in keeping with the dwelling**
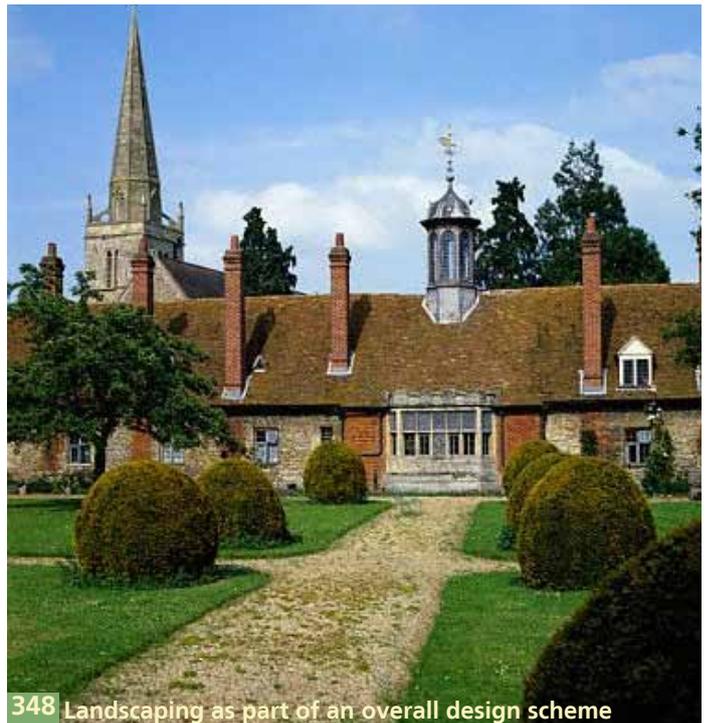
348 **Landscaping as part of an overall design scheme**

a buffer between the new development and its surroundings.

It is essential that trees and hedgerows are properly protected during construction, and new buildings, hard surfaces and underground services are located to avoid causing any harm to their well-being.

New Soft Landscape Features

Trees and shrubs can make an important contribution to the character of an area by adding visual interest, giving structure and form to public and private spaces, and improving the legibility of a place. New trees and shrubs, therefore, should be included in all new residential development as part of the scheme's overall design

Native trees and shrubs should be planted wherever possible, as they are locally appropriate and deciduous varieties offer shade in the summer. Where new hedge planting is proposed, native hedge species should be used and quick growing species such as Leylandii should be avoided.

Care should be taken when planning and positioning trees to ensure they will not affect services such as lighting columns or overhead cables in later years.

New trees and shrubs should be planted where they will not cause problems for buildings and infrastructure in the future, either by affecting foundations or underground services or by causing overshadowing of habitable rooms.

Landscape design also has a role in deterring crime – e.g. tough and spiky planting can help prevent unauthorised access to a property.

New Hard Landscape Features

The residential environment can include a wide range of features such as paved areas, seats, litter bins, light fittings and public art (e.g. sculptures or decorative railings). Proposals for new residential development need to demonstrate how each of these features has been included as part of the scheme's overall design.

349 Street furniture and hard landscaping must be designed as part of an overall scheme

350 Tree protection needs to be aesthetically pleasing as well as being functional

351 Changes in paving denote entrances and public/private space

352 Modern front garden landscaping scheme for new build apartments

Paving & Surfacing

The choice of paving and surfacing materials should be informed by a number of factors including their purpose, appearance, and technical requirements (e.g. sustainable drainage).

Materials such as gravel, setts and cobbles are most appropriate, especially in sensitive locations such as conservation areas.

Concrete or tarmac should be used with caution as their uniform appearance and sharp finish can undermine the character of a new development.

All surfacing and crossing facilities should take into account the needs of people with impaired mobility.

Street Furniture

The design and location of street furniture should take into account the character of the area and the need to avoid harming the amenity of residents (e.g. benches can encourage people to gather) or impeding people with impaired mobility. The design and location of street furniture, therefore, needs to be considered as part of the early stages of the design process.

Lighting and Services

Lighting columns should be kept to a minimum and, wherever possible, light fittings should be located on existing or new buildings.

All lighting features should accord with the design approach for other street furniture.

Light fittings should be designed to avoid causing light pollution.

Art

Opportunities should be taken to introduce original art (e.g. decorative railings, benches and sculptures) into larger residential developments. Art features should be developed in association with residents to help provide a sense of ownership of the project. They can define a space and act as a focal point for the community.

353 Traditional and modern bench designs

354 Well designed bins do not have to be unsightly

355 Traditional and modern lighting designs

3.5
How to Create Character with Landscaping

Open Space

Larger scale residential developments will require the inclusion of well designed and accessible open spaces such as children's play areas and playing fields.

The council's Open Space, Sport and Recreation Future Provision Supplementary Planning Document (July 2008) sets out the open space requirements for new developments, in terms of its quantity, quality and accessibility. The SPD explains the open space provision standards, design objectives and principles, security and safety aspects, and the future management and maintenance requirements.

Ecology

All sites offer the opportunity to provide habitats for wildlife.

Appraise the ecological value and potential of a site

The ecological value of a site should be considered as part of the initial site appraisal. The initial site appraisal should identify locally important biodiversity and landscape features such as woodland, trees, hedgerows, grassland, ponds, ditches and streams. More detailed ecological surveys may be required in sensitive locations, such as near protected sites (e.g. SACs [Special Areas of Conservation], SSSI's [Sites of Special Scientific Interest], local nature reserves and local wildlife sites), where UK BAP [Biodiversity Action Plan] priority habitats or species are present or where a site has the potential to be a habitat for protected species. The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre can provide information on the location of protected species sites, some UK BAP priority habitats and notable and protected species records (www.tverc.org.uk). The Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management has a list of ecological consultants who can carry out ecological surveys (www.ieem.net/ieemdirectory.asp).

Retain existing habitats and create new habitats

Site features such as woodlands, mature trees, heaths, pastures, hedgerows, ponds, ditches and

356 Public art provides a number of benefits including giving a place a sense of identity

357 Children's play areas should be inviting and well designed