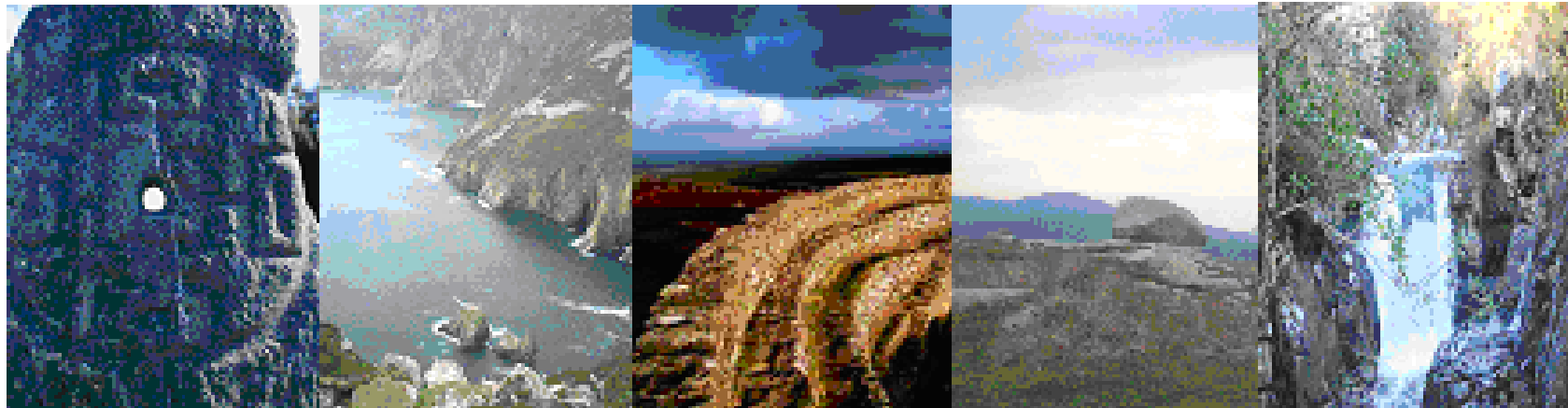


## Section 5 Location & Reading the Landscape

Donegal is the third largest county in Ireland with wide ranging and diverse landscapes. For the purpose of this guide the county will be divided into five landscape types, which best represent the county as a whole.

- **Low Lying Fertile Plain**
- **Valley Slopes & Inland Waterway**
- **Upland & Moorland**
- **Drumlin**
- **Coastal & Island**





## 5.1 Low Lying Fertile Plain

- Examples: Burt, Big Isle, Finn Valley.
- Characteristics: long stretching views, rich low-lying lands, large scale flat or gently sloping fertile fields, clustered mature deciduous trees, a profusion of hedgerow and general lush vegetation cover, typically sub-divided into large intensively worked farms.
- House Types: large estate homes set within mature woods/landscaped gardens, groups of clustered farm buildings, single storey with attic development & two storey farmhouses, workers cottages, generally stone built with painted rendered walls, slate roofs, corrugated metal large scale farm buildings, planned urban centres.
- Threats: Rapid urbanisation evident particularly along Letterkenny – Derry, Lifford – Ballybofey/Stranorlar Corridors and within hinterlands of larger towns.  
Inappropriate house design in one off housing, drawing inspiration from classical estate houses and applying to small sites, mixing inappropriate suburban styles.

Care should be taken in these areas due to long views and high visibility of individual houses developed. Design should encompass good rural design principles as contained within the remainder of the guide; urban and suburban type house designs should be avoided. The favourable soil, ground and weather conditions in these areas provide opportunities for planting. Enhancement planting and planting for integration should be widely undertaken.



## 5.2 Valley Slopes & Inland Waterways

- Examples: Lough Swilly, Gartan Lough, Assaroe Lough, Lough Derg, Lough Eske
- Characteristics: Mixed land cover, stone and ditch boundaries, alternating soil qualities, sloping valley sides, undulating views, smaller field enclosures, profusion wood and scrub land, narrow country lanes, shelter planting, hanging woods can be in evidence, smaller sub division of farmlands, grouping and clustering of houses occasionally at road crossing points.
- House Types: Narrow plan single and two storey farmhouses, single cottages with ancillary byres etc to wings, small farmyard and clustered buildings, 19<sup>th</sup> century work cottages. Stone build painted, rendered and painted, thatch, slate and painted metal roofing.
- Threats: Often within commuting distances of larger towns, permanent and holiday home development pressure due to scenic, rural nature. Increased septic tank usage poses soil and water pollution threat, woodland, natural boundaries and shelter planting being cleared to provide development space, inappropriate siting and design of one off dwellings degrading scenic qualities of such areas.

Care should be taken in these areas due to undulating topographies and slopes, poorly sited houses can appear obtrusive and strident unless care is taken with design type and siting within the site.

Exposed crests and shoulders of slopes should be avoided. Excavation and infilling should be avoided.

Design should follow simple, solid construction principles contained within remainder of guide. Over large "blocky" house types should be avoided.

Sites in such areas can and should always be planted in order to aid integration, planting can also be undertaken on damp areas within site.



### 5.3 Upland & Moorland

- Examples: Slopes and foothills associated with mountain ranges, i.e. Bluestack, Derryveigh, Glendowan. Areas displaying similar characteristics to Dunlewy, Mamore Gap, Barnesmore.
- Characteristics: Rugged, barren terrain, exposed slopes, heather & low level ground cover vegetation, tree/scrub growth limited mainly within small sheltered gaps, rocky outcrops, poor, acidic, often waterlogged soils, stone walls, small enclosed field structures.
- House Types: single storey, small scale, low, long homesteads, tucked into sheltered gaps or within fertile small pocket valleys. Gables to prevailing winds. Stone build, often rendered and painted, thatch, slate, painted metal and sod with grass/heather cover roofing. Stonewalls, sod and thatch roofs ensured high levels of integration with landscape. Dispersed nature or grouped within fertile pockets of land. Tree belts of hardy species often surround single houses.
- Threats: Scarring of landscape through excavation and infill of sites to provide flat site conditions, quarrying of stone faces creates permanent scarring, this should always be avoided. Development of obtrusive higher-level buildings leads to sky lining. Obtrusive buildings sited at high levels to maximise views. Poor capacity of soil for treatment of wastewater.

Particularly sensitive house design necessary for such areas due to high levels of visibility, long sighting distances and lack of vegetation, tree growth and potential for new planting. Low, long, narrow house types are appropriate.

Design should follow simple, solid construction principles contained within remainder of guide. Crests and shoulders of slopes should be avoided.

Naturally occurring tucks and hollows or development of mounding, stonewalls etc should be employed for shelter and integration.

Planting may not always be possible in such locations. See Appendix for notes on soil suitability for planting.



## 5.4 Drumlin

- Examples: Ballintra, Donegal Town, Killea, Coolmore & Rossnowlagh Areas.
- Characteristics: Profusion of undulating, localised small hills. Gravel soils, dry slopes with wet and damp areas collecting between hills and to bottom of slopes. Tree growth often found to base and lower slopes of hills. Small, enclosed, undulating landscape with small, enclosed field boundaries. Stonewalls often prevalent due to abundance of fieldstone.
- House Types: small farming cottages, traditional small scale one and half storey & two story farmhouses, clustered around road crossing points or close to road edges, roads following low-lying lands between hills & easy route options. Houses were narrow plan particularly at roadside sites, or stepped to accommodate slope. Stone built due to abundance of field stone, often left unrendered and unpainted, prevalence of slate and thatch roofing with painted corrugated metal to outbuildings.
- Threats: Quarrying, permanent and holiday home development pressure as often located close to areas of natural beauty, high level, visually obtrusive large scale & suburban type housing.  
Excavation to create flat site conditions; within small-scale hills and enclosed landscapes excavation is highly intrusive and scarring, slopes difficult to re-grass/soften. Obtrusive development to top of slopes in order to maximise views. Poor ground suitability for wastewater disposal, run off from slopes may pool in wetter hollow areas.

Large scale, high level buildings not suitable within such enclosed landscapes, development to top of slopes can be easily viewed over long distances. New building should take advantage of localised valley areas between slopes, avoiding shoulders and crests of slopes. Narrow house or stepped designs are appropriate. Design should follow simple, solid construction principles contained within remainder of guide.



## 5.5 Coastal & Island

- Examples: Malin, Fanad, Rosguill, Gweedore, The Rosses, Glencolmcille, Creevy Tory Island, Inishboffin, Arainn Mhor
- Characteristics: Rugged indented coastline, small bays and inlets, exposed rocky outcrops prevalent, small, stone wall enclosed fields, lack of vegetation and tree cover, open, exposed long views. Dispersed development pattern, development in small tucks and bays within landscape or huddled in lee of hill knolls. Roadside development. Coastal clustering at sheltered bays, development of piers etc.
- House Types: Small stone built, single storey, rendered and painted cottages prevalent, associated small stone outbuildings often sited around and at right angles to cottages for shelter. Gables to prevailing winds. Thatch, slate, painted corrugated metal and tarred felt widely used for roofing.
- Threats: Cultural change resulting from increased recreational use of coast and beaches, rapid increase and spread of unsympathetically designed and sited holiday developments, suburban building design and layouts. Excavation to accommodate larger, out of scale dwellings resulting in permanent scarring. Move towards inappropriate suburban designs, removal stone walls and hedgerows, lack of shelter, poor soils, adverse weather conditions and salt laden winds means planting may not always be possible. No means of softening development. Poor ground conditions for wastewater treatment.

Given the exposed nature of such landscapes and harsh seasonal weather conditions, higher-level house designs should be avoided. Siting should be considered carefully, exposure will result in heat loss and weathering of external finishes.

Naturally occurring landforms, mounding and stonewalls should be exploited for shelter and integration. Larger scaled buildings will appear incongruous and obtrusive particularly if poorly sited, open long views will mean developments will be visible for long distances. Long, low and broken up design form is most appropriate. Design should follow simple, solid construction principles contained within remainder of guide