



# THAXTED BUILDING DESIGN GUIDE 2023

*a better future for all Thaxted  
a better future for everyone!*

These pages are intended as a guide. They carry no statutory weight. They simply set out the building styles and treatments, as well as street scene and 'place' making, preferred and encouraged by the Thaxted Society.

They are offered as an aid to design. They are drawn from historical research at Thaxted, from Build Beautiful national initiatives, and responses to climate change. We offer these pages, in order to, affect the visual properties of 'place' and protect the delicate visual legacy that is Thaxted

The Essex Building Design Guide, the N.P.P.F., Thaxted Society Archives and Thaxted Neighbourhood Plan have been consulted in preparing these pages, as well as the Uttlesford Design Guide and draft Local Plan.

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**In our visual environment** houses and buildings provide the largest factor in how our towns, villages and cities look. Of course there are fences and walls, gates and doors, street furniture, surfaces, lighting and signage. But our homes are very much the predominant factor in a place like Thaxted.

The collection of all the styles and changes over the years are called the 'vernacular', or the visual language of a place. Whilst across Essex much may be similar there are always some small and telling details, which are more unique to one place than another.

This is particularly true at Thaxted where there are some striking and unique details, which set it apart. The huge width of Town Street, the size of the Church, the evidence of industry and labour over the years, our period street lamps. For a small place Thaxted has many unique and important architectural qualities.

There is a difference between historical vernacular and received vernacular. One set of visual details and styles derives from a time when location and class dictated how our buildings were built and looked , this is:

**Historic vernacular** - where there was stone they are built of stone, where there was wood they built of wood. For the wealthy there was no such impediment, Audley End is largely stone built whilst Horham Hall is mostly Tudor brick, both indicating wealth and status.



**Received vernacular** is that visual environment which is with us through the historical narrative, where materials and appearance are not a function of location but simply of taste and more recently commerce.

Here there is always a nod to these styles and of course planning plays its part. But for a place like Thaxted with such a large conservation area these styles and details are marked identifiers of both the settlement and its history.

For Essex, and indeed Thaxted, the historic vernacular contains these obvious elements, which entirely reflect their location, surroundings and available resources.

- **Timber frame**
- **Weatherboarding**
- **Lath and plaster**
- **Pargetting**
- **Peg tiles**
- **Steep roof pitches**
- **Thatch**
- **Jetted floors**
- **Overhanging eaves**
- **Heavy joints & ironwork**



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**The street scene** of a place like Thaxted though, reflects its greatest moments of growth. So, whilst the majority of houses within the conservation area are of a similar construction, later houses, offer not only other building styles and materials but also changes to the original construction to reflect later styles and tastes.

- **Brick facing**
- **Brick construction**
- **Enclosing jetted floors**
- **Use of slate tile**
- **Provision of gardens**
- **Bay windows**

However, both the earliest and the latest appear in degrees while one clearly dominates and the other styles simply add to the whole street scene.

## **Buildings within the conservation area:**

Timber framed buildings

72%

Brick or refaced buildings

15%

Original brick build

13%

## **Roofs:**

Peg tile roofs

88%

Slate roofs

11%

Thatch

1%



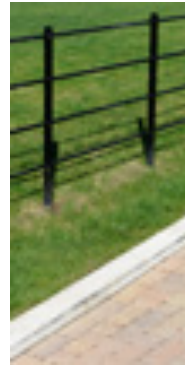
**So we can see** that in the panoply of styles at Thaxted there are dominant themes.

- **Painted render with and without pargetting**
- **Weatherboarding**
- **Soft red brick and flint**
- **Some Victorian details such as finials and pinnacles**
- **Some degree of brick relief detailing in rendered houses**
- **Steep roof pitches**
- **Cheek by jowl extensions and gardens**
- **Broken roof-lines, suggesting timber frame movement or alterations**

At the Thaxted Society we believe that where these elements are included in new build that the visual environment is improved and 'cohesive whole' enforced.

This does not preclude today's building regulations and possibilities. For example, well situated solar panels can be an ecological boon to households.





**THAXTED  
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**Thaxted Society  
Adopted Policy 2013 and amended 2015**

- To oppose all building outside the current development limits.
- To resist all matters of creeping urbanisation of Thaxted and most vigorously of the historic core.
- To discourage parking on pavements, ancient pathways and ancient cobbles.
- To oppose all planning for the conversion of garages, car-ports and car parking resulting in the loss of parking without alternative for said dwelling.
- To resist and oppose change of use from commercial & business to residential.
- **The Society encourages the installation of charging points in Thaxted by developers and Public Bodies alike**
- To robustly discourage the use of concrete kerbstones and asphalt public pavements and pathways.
- To vigorously defend and seek conservation of our original gas light lamp-stands and to robustly discourage installation of modern unsympathetic public lighting.

And resulting from the adoption hereto to publish a guide to policy including explanation and guidance on suitable vernacular style and form for the built environment of Thaxted.



**The street scene** – the foregoing concerns itself with buildings. But much of our visual world is also made up of the pavements, roads and street lighting.

Here we believe that Thaxted is an exception to the bland regulations. In this we are firmly convinced that the historic core's visual detail should be extended to cover new build.

*There seems little point in regulating uses of the vernacular in new buildings if the environment in which they sit is blatantly urban.*

So we also recommend the following:

- **Pavers or cobbles for pavement / shared parking**
- **Stone kerb-stones**
- **Street lighting that at least reflects the vernacular**

We strongly caution against the blanket use of:

- **asphalt surfaces for pavements**
- **the use of concrete kerb-stones**
- **the use of brutalist off the shelf street lighting.**

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SOCIETY

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