

A Mole Valley which is
Fairer, Greener and provides
Opportunity for all

Extending Your House

Design Guidance for House
Extensions and Outbuildings–
Supplementary Planning Document

July 2025

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Mole Valley District Council is proud of the District's attractive towns, villages and individual buildings and considers it is one of the Council's most important responsibilities to ensure that all new development – whether big or small – is of the highest possible standard. Therefore, the Council has produced this design guide to set out what the Council considers is good design in terms of house extensions. This document updates a 2000 document. Over the past twenty-five years, the motivation behind house extensions has evolved considerably. In contrast to the relatively static designs of schools, health centres, and offices, house extensions are now pursued not only for the purpose of expanding floor space but also for enhancing aesthetics and achieving aspirational living standards. This document reflects this shift in mindset.
- 1.2. This document has the status of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which means it will be a material consideration when the Council decides planning applications and when a planning refusal is appealed.
- 1.3. Good design is desirable both for its own sake and to enhance the physical environment. Poor or mediocre design is often a reason for public opposition to extensions or to new buildings. This design guide is intended to assist architects, developers and private individuals in achieving well-designed house extensions and planning officers in giving design advice. Identifying key design considerations and issues at an early stage can save time and money by avoiding the need to redraw your proposals and ultimately can prevent your proposal being refused planning permission.
- 1.4. Good design does not always mean it costs more to construct and alterations that are of a high design standard can add value to a property. Unfortunately, the opposite can be true for a badly designed extension which can reduce a property's desirability (curb appeal) as well as having a detrimental effect on a neighbour's amenity and on the area's overall character.
- 1.5. As the District is diverse and varied in character with many different types, styles and sizes of property, the guidance cannot reflect every individual situation, nor should it stifle imaginative architectural designs where these accord with the Council's overall policy on house extensions. It does however indicate the most common planning and design considerations which should be taken into account by applicants and householders even where planning permission may not be required.

Policy Context

- 1.6. This document is in conformity with Paragraph 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) which requires:

“The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.”

- 1.7. This design guide will also supplement the criteria set out in policies EN4, EN6, EN7 and EN8 of the Mole Valley Local Plan (2023) which should also be referred to in planning application submissions.

Design Principles

Neighbourliness

- 1.8. Extensions and alterations can significantly change the appearance of a property and, where poorly designed, can have detrimental impact on the character and amenity of an area. They can also have significant impacts on neighbouring properties.
- 1.9. All proposed extensions should be designed appropriately taking the amenities of neighbouring properties into account to ensure it does not cause harmful loss of daylight and sunlight to habitable rooms, any visual intrusion and preventing an extension impacting the privacy of neighbours (see section 3).

Respecting the Character of the Property

- 1.10. Extensions should generally be of a scale that is subordinate and appropriate to the existing dwelling, in line with Policy EN4 3f of the Local Plan. Being subordinate is necessary to prevent terracing between and at the rear of existing properties, or to avoid disproportionately large additions to the front of a property that could detract from the appearance of the streetscene. By adhering to Chapters 4 and 5 of this guidance the appropriate scale will generally be achieved. Nevertheless, this should not stifle or discourage high-quality design regarding form, fenestration, materials, and detailing.

Sympathetic Design

- 1.11. Extensions and alterations to dwellings should respond to the existing character and scale whilst developing a high-quality approach to the design in terms of form, fenestration, materials and architectural detailing. Whilst there may be other successful design approaches the primary approaches the Council receives are the Subordinate and Integrated approaches (see section 4). This guidance should not stifle creativity in achieving high quality innovative designs.

Respecting the Character of the Locality

- 1.12. Developments should consider and take into account the character of the area and dwelling which the extension or alteration is proposed. The character of an area includes, but is not limited to, the size shape and positioning of buildings as well as their landscaping, materials and details. Extensions should respond to the character of the dwelling and existing streetscene in accordance with Policy EN4 3a of the Local Plan (also see section 6). To respond does not necessarily mean replicate, the Council will encourage innovative designs that work with the existing character of the dwelling and surroundings. Proposals that are deemed to detrimentally impact the character will be unacceptable.

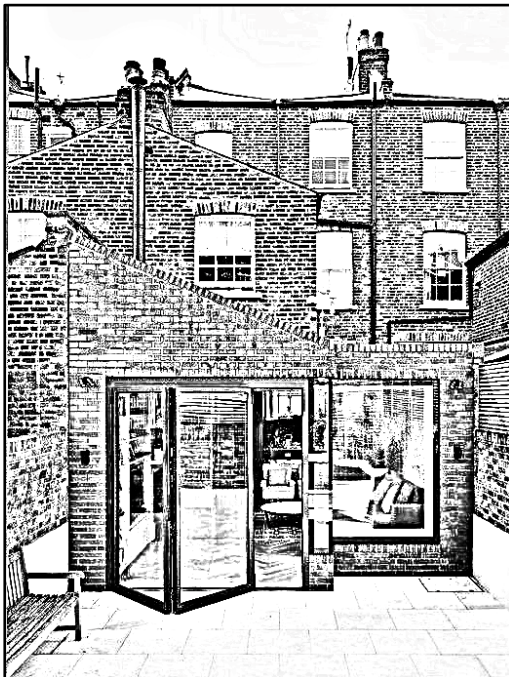


Figure 2.12 - A subordinate extension. Its form respects the character of the existing dwelling but incorporates larger windows



Figure 1.12b - Successful side extension that incorporates a mix of contemporary and matching external materials with larger windows

Demonstrating compliance

- 1.13. The Council strongly advises the use of Design and Access Statements when submitting house extensions. These can be used as a key tool for applicants to demonstrate how their proposal complies with the Council's guidance, or if they deviate from it, how design principles and quality is upheld for the specific site or property. Design and Access statements should prioritise the use of annotated images and visual aids over excessive text.

2. General considerations

Planning Applications

- 2.1. You will need planning permission for many extensions and alterations to existing properties, but some smaller residential extensions and outbuildings do not need planning permission. This is referred to as permitted development. Even if your house extension or alteration does not need planning permission, the Council always wants to encourage good design.
- 2.2. Further information on planning applications and permitted development rights can be found on the Government's [Interactive Planning Portal tool](#).
- 2.3. If your development does NOT fall within permitted development then you will need to apply for planning permission. A planning application can be submitted online through the Planning Portal or by downloading the relevant forms from the Council's website: <https://www.molevalley.gov.uk/home/building-planning/planning-applications/planning-application-forms-and-fees>

Permitted Development and Certificate of Lawfulness

- 2.4. Permitted development proposals usually concern smaller works to residential properties (e.g. single storey extensions, outbuildings, boundary treatments, electric charging points and satellite dishes). Not all permitted development rights apply to flats or maisonettes (e.g extensions).
- 2.5. More modern properties, typically from the 1980s until the present day, and properties within Conservation Areas may have restrictions on their permitted development rights or may have had their permitted development rights removed entirely or in part by a planning condition when permission was granted.
- 2.6. If you wish to have formal confirmation that your proposal does not require planning permission, you can submit an application for a Lawful Development Certificate (LDC) to the Council: <https://www.planningportal.co.uk/applications> .

Pre-Application Advice

- 2.7. Mole Valley District Council can provide pre-application advice about your proposal. Our pre-application advice can:
 - Give you a clearer idea as to whether your planning proposal would be granted planning permission;
 - Give advice on what areas of the proposal would need to be changed, avoiding the cost of an unsuccessful application;
 - Help you achieve a better quality development;

- Reduce the time your professional agent needs to spend on making amendments during the application stage; and in turn,
- Save you money on professional fees for making amendments during the application stage

2.8. For further information and to submit a pre-application enquiry online visit:
[Planning pre-app advice – Mole Valley District Council](#)

Other Permissions Separate to Planning Permission and Other Information

Building Regulations

2.9. Irrespective of whether you require planning permission, you may need separate Building Regulation approval. This is to check the work you are doing meets certain safety and environmental standards that are required by law.

Underground utilities

2.10. Public sewers can often be located within the boundary of a property and this needs to be considered when designing a house extension.

Building Over a Sewer

2.11. If you're constructing a new extension, first, you should check if it is subject to the Building Regulations. If it is, then you will need to confirm that it meets the standards set out in section H4 of the Building Regulations. Either a Local Authority Building Control (LABC) department or an independent approved inspector can assess this.

2.12. Some LABCs or inspectors may be able to progress your proposals in consultation with your local water company, rather than you submitting a build over application.

2.13. You can usually use this route if your development meets all the following points:

- Pipe size is 225mm or less
- Pipe depth is less than 3m
- The total length of the public sewer built over is less than 6m
- Access to the public sewer is unimpeded, and you are not building boundary to boundary (within one metre of the boundary line)
- It is an extension, not a new detached structure
- Building over/near only one public sewer

2.14. It is also important that the design of the extension incorporates the management of surface water if necessary, the H3 guidance should be followed and sustainable drainage systems implemented where necessary, a discharge of surface water will not be permitted to either a foul only public sewer or a combined public sewers.

This approach ensures that we work together to better protect the environment, improve water quality and reduce flood risk.

- 2.15. You can carry out a search for utilities in or around your site by using the [Line-Search-before-U-Dig](#) and/or [Digdat](#) websites and using other internet sites or specialist companies to ensure you get the complete picture of the underground installations.

Party wall agreements

- 2.16. Party wall agreements are different from planning permission or building regulations approval. You must tell your neighbours if you want to carry out any building work near or on your shared property boundary, or 'party wall', in England and Wales. It should be noted that a neighbour's permission is required if foundations encroach, or if an extension overhangs or attaches to their property. Their consent will also be needed if access to their property is necessary during construction, or for subsequent maintenance (planning permission does not grant this). This is a separate legal matter between both parties under the Party Wall Act 1996 in which the Council takes no part.
- 2.17. For further information visit: [Party walls and building work - GOV.UK](#).

Conservation areas and listed buildings

- 2.18. Pre-application advice should be sought for proposals affecting conservation areas and listed buildings. Please visit [Planning pre-app advice – Mole Valley District Council](#).
- 2.19. To find out whether your home is within a conservation area please visit the Council's [interactive Policies map](#).
- 2.20. All extensions, and many alterations, to listed buildings require 'Listed Building Consent' which is a separate process to obtaining planning permission. For further information visit: [Listed Buildings - Other permissions you may require - Planning Portal](#).
- 2.21. For further information on undertaking work in conservation areas, please visit [Conservation areas - Other permissions you may require - Planning Portal](#).

Impact upon trees

- 2.22. When considering an extension to your home or a garden structure you should consider whether your development may impact upon tree roots within or adjacent to your property. If your development could impact upon the Root Protection Area (RPA) of a tree, you may be asked to provide a Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Assessment as part of your planning submission.
- 2.23. In addition, some trees may be legally protected. It is an offence to carry out works to a tree which is subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or any tree which is

within a Conservation Area without consent. See the Council's website for further information.

- 2.24. Wherever possible, you should keep garden trees and landscaping features that make a positive contribution to the character of the area. You should ensure that any trees that are unavoidably lost, are replaced elsewhere, particularly publicly visible trees. You can find out more about the benefits of trees in residential developments on the Woodland Trust website.
- 2.25. You should also make sure that the species and location of any new planting of trees and shrubs are appropriate for the location so that damage to underground infrastructure, such as pipes and cables, is avoided.

Ecology

- 2.26. Construction, demolition, extension or conversion proposals could unlawfully affect a bat roost in a building. More information about bats in buildings and their legal protection can be found at the [Bat Conservation Trust](#). The Council will expect a bat survey to be submitted with a planning application in certain circumstances. For further information refer to the Local Validation Requirements information for planning applications under - [Submitting a planning application](#). Also refer to national advice for further information [Bats: advice for making planning decisions \(gov.uk\)](#).
- 2.27. Certain birds use features within houses while nesting, and it is a criminal offence to intentionally destroy, damage or take an active nest or their eggs. If it is suspected that nesting birds may be affected by a proposal, a qualified ecologist should be contacted for advice and the information submitted as part of the planning application.
- 2.28. Mole Valley's Local Plan Policy EN9 (Natural Assets) supports development proposals that incorporate small scale wildlife habitats into built structures and their curtilages. These might include creating new habitats, enhancing existing habitats, or, for example incorporating 'swift bricks' and bat or bird nest boxes in developments and providing safe routes for hedgehogs between different habitat areas. Further information on swift bricks in developments can be found on the CIEEM website: [The swift a bird you need to help](#)

Renewable Energy and Climate Change Measures

Air source heat pumps

- 2.29. Air source heat pumps take warmth from the air and use an evaporator coil to supply heating and/or hot water to a building. Ground source heat pumps consist of pipes underneath the ground which extract warmth to supply heating and/or hot water to a building. This requires a certain amount of space externally.

- 2.30. Heat pumps are generally permitted development and do not need planning permission where they meet certain criteria, for further information visit [Planning Permission – Air source heat pumps – Planning Portal](#).
- 2.31. Air source heat pumps should be discreetly positioned at the rear or in side gardens of the property at ground floor level to minimise impact on the external appearance of the building. This is particularly important in sensitive locations and on heritage assets. Considerations should also be given to placing the units where they will not cause a noise nuisance to a neighbour.
- 2.32. Similarly to air source heat pumps, external air conditioning condenser units, whilst they are not renewable energy installations, they can often be Permitted Development and should also be installed discreetly away from principal elevations and at ground floor level to minimise impact on the external appearance and noise impacts on neighbouring properties.

Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and tiles

- 2.33. In many circumstances, solar panels fixed to the wall or roof of a house, or solar tiles on the roof, are classed as ‘permitted development’ and do not require planning permission. Use the following link for further advice: [Interactive House - Planning Portal](#).
- 2.34. If the solar panels or tiles are to be installed on a listed building or within the grounds of a listed building, Listed Building Consent and/or planning permission are likely to be required. In this instance, please visit [Planning pre-app advice – Mole Valley District Council](#). Further advice can be found here: [Historic England - installing-photovoltaics](#)
- 2.35. If your property is in a conservation area, solar installations generally require planning permission, In this instance, please visit [Planning pre-app advice – Mole Valley District Council](#). To find out whether your home is within a conservation area please visit our [interactive Policies map](#).
- 2.36. Whether solar installations need planning permission or not, the Council would advise the following:
- Colour and material: choose solar panels/tiles that match the colour and material of your roof. Many manufacturers offer various frames and cell colour options to blend in with the existing roof.
 - Low-profile mounting: opt for low-profile mounting systems that keep solar panels closer to, or within the roof surface. This minimises the visual impact. ‘A-frame’ mounted panels on flat roofs are unlikely to be acceptable.
 - Symmetry and alignment: ensure that the solar panels are aligned symmetrically and evenly spaced. Ensure solar tiles are grouped for a consistent appearance. This creates a balanced look and helps maintain the architectural harmony of your roof.
 - Hidden wiring: conceal wiring and connections as much as possible. This can be done by routing cables through the roofspace or behind walls to maintain a clean and uncluttered appearance.

External wall insulation

- 2.1. Where a property is detached or appears unique in a streetscene, external wall insulation on a side or rear elevation is unlikely to be objected to unless the property is a designated or non-designated (locally Listed) heritage asset, or within a Conservation Area; or those elevations are a prominent part of the streetscene and are considered to add to the character of the area. Properties that are semi-detached or within a terrace, alternative forms of retrofitting will first be encouraged. If other forms of retrofitting are not considered feasible, householders are encouraged to visit Planning pre-app advice – Mole Valley District Council.

Retrofitting double glazing

- 2.2. Improving the windows and doors in your home can deliver significant benefits such as better thermal comfort (the window pane will be warmer), fewer draughts and better acoustic insulation. Better window and doors can also be a one of the measures required to make a home 'heat pump ready', through energy savings and peak heat demand reduction. Retrofitting double glazing, particularly when replacing original single glazed windows, should be done in a sensitive way to respect the character of the dwelling.
- 2.3. The choice of material of new windows and door frames should be consistent. Where wooden frames are already used, this should be continued unless there is a particular design rationale for introducing a different framing system. Metal frames may be appropriate in contemporary proposals. The quality and appearance of wooden and metal frames tends to be superior to uPVC and are therefore preferable.
- 2.4. Further guidance on window design can be found in the Surrey Design Guide which can be viewed here: [Surrey-Design-Guide](#)
- 2.5. If the property is within a Conservation Area or a Listed Building, doors and windows can be an important part of the architectural significance of a historic building. For further information visit: [Historic England: modifying-windows-and-doors-in-historic-buildings](#)

Solar glazing

- 2.6. Solar glazing can achieve reduced solar heat gains through the use of tinted glass, reflective coated glass and special high performance insulating glass units. The use of tinted glass and reflective coated glass should be avoided, especially where a property can be seen in wider views or is in protected landscape areas (Surrey Hills National Landscape or Areas of Great Landscape Value), as these change the external appearance of the glazing and can cause strong solar glare.
- 2.7. Solar insulating glass is a type of glazing that reflects a proportion of the sun's heat while allowing visible light to pass through. Where this type of glazing does not detrimentally affect the external appearance of the glass, it is supported.

3. Neighbourliness

- 3.1. Before submitting an application it is advisable to talk to your neighbours first. They may have suggestions that could be incorporated in the design. It is also best that they hear of the proposal first from you rather than when the Council notifies them of the proposal. The Council is required to notify adjoining neighbours on the receipt of a planning application and any planning-related concerns they express to the Council will be taken into consideration. The effect that your proposed development will have on adjacent properties, whether neighbours comment on an application or not, will be considered. Even if your neighbours do not object, the Council can raise objections to a proposal if it is un-neighbourly.
- 3.2. Neighbours in turn have to recognise the Government's advice that the basic question for the planning authority is not whether they would experience financial or other loss from a potential development. Instead, it is whether the proposal would unacceptably affect the amenity of others. Good neighbourliness is one of the yardsticks against which development proposals can be measured. This includes daylight and sunlight, privacy and outlook.

Daylight and Sunlight

- 3.3. An extension to a property should not cause any significant loss of daylight or sunlight to habitable rooms in the neighbouring properties nor unreasonably reduce sunlight to neighbouring gardens to a substantial degree. Aspect is an important consideration. For instance, an adjacent property is more likely to suffer a reduction in sunlight if the extension is on its southern side.

What are habitable rooms?

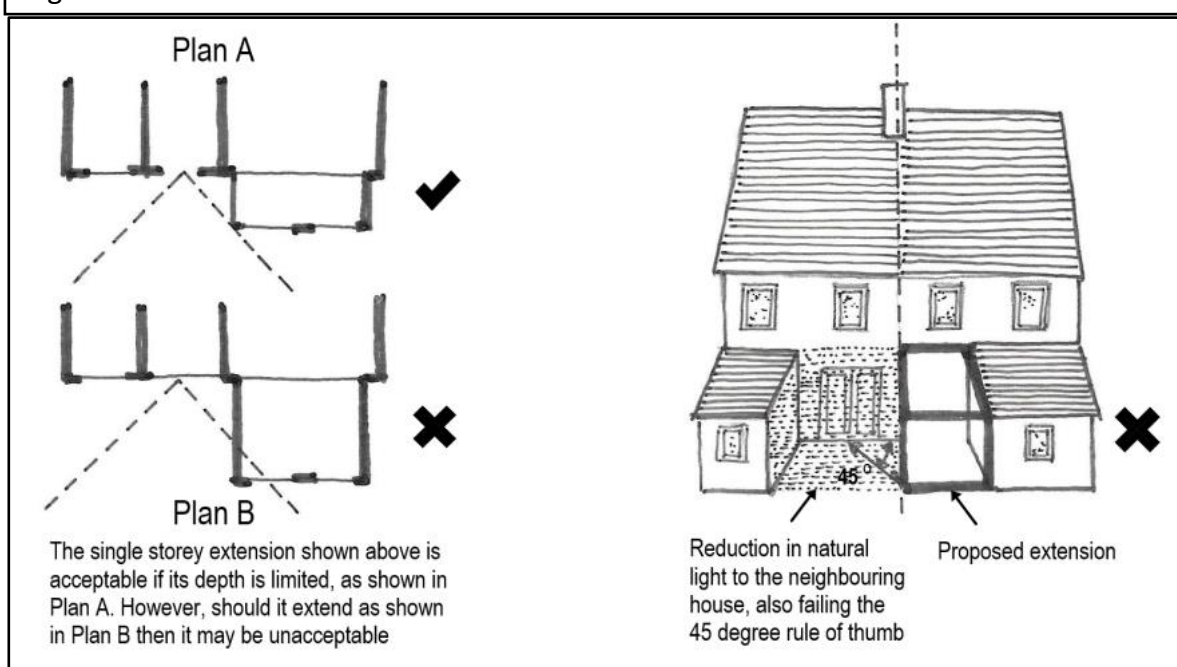
- 3.4. Habitable rooms are considered to be the main principal rooms that are used within a dwelling, these comprise:
 - Living rooms;
 - Dining rooms;
 - Large kitchens/kitchen-diners;
 - Breakfast rooms;
 - Studies; and,
 - Bedrooms
- 3.5. Habitable rooms do not include very small kitchens, utility rooms, bathrooms, storerooms, circulation spaces (halls, stairs and landings), garages and outbuildings.
- 3.6. In assessing the likely impact of an extension to a dwelling on an adjacent property two rules of thumb are generally employed based upon the Building

Research Establishment (BRE) document 'Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A guide to good practice (2022)': the 45° horizontal rule and the 25° vertical rule.

The 45° Horizontal Rule

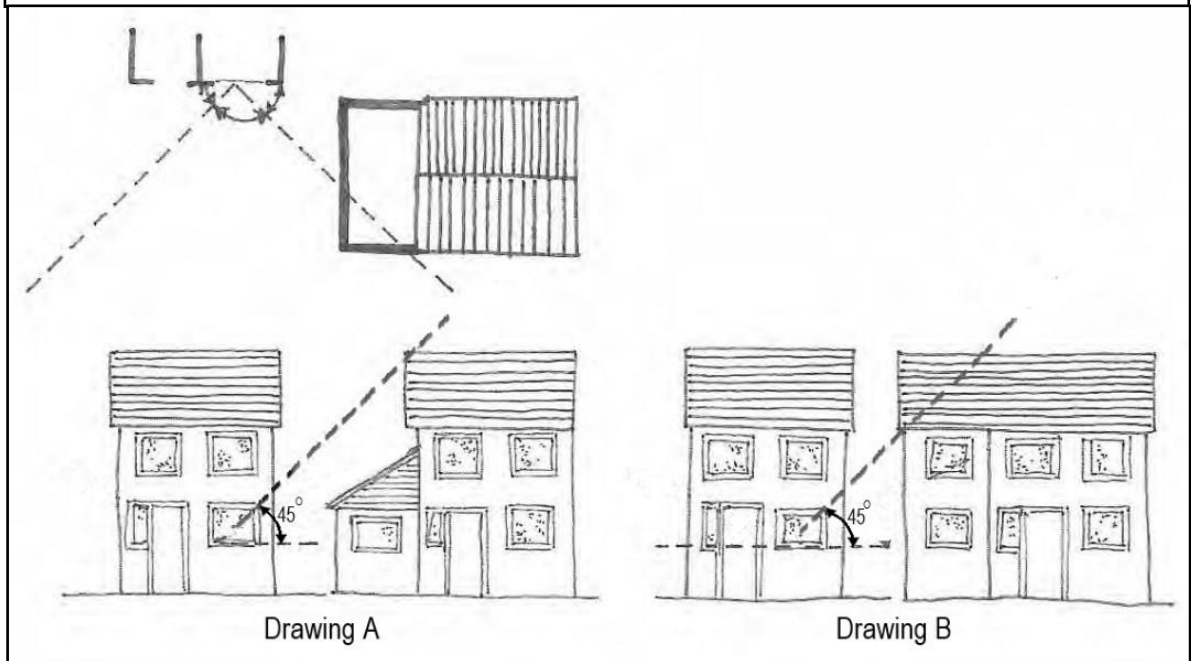
- 3.7. Figure 1 shows the use of a 45° plane plotted from an adjacent property's window. The same rule applies for single and two-storey extensions. If the extension extends beyond the 45° plane (Plan B) then this suggests that the passage of light to the neighbouring property's habitable rooms might be significantly affected. This is only a general rule, and factors such as the nature of the room affected, (a ground floor living room facing the garden being more sensitive than a secondary side-facing window), the aspect of the room affected, the size of the window relative to ground levels and whether there are any further and larger unaffected windows lighting the same room, will also be taken into account.
- 3.8. If an extension fails the 45° horizontal rule of thumb, it may be acceptable if a second 45° rule is applied. This involves considering the 3-D effects of the proposal in more detail (on elevation view). Under this rule, if the centre (or greater than the centre) of the neighbour's window (or the centre of patio doors) falls within the 45° line of shadow from the extension, which is a 45° angle measured from the proposed extension's wall closest to the boundary, it is more likely that the extension would significantly reduce daylight to the neighbouring property's habitable rooms (see Figure 2). If this is the case then the more detailed BRE tests should be carried out.

Figure 1: The 45° Horizontal Rule



- 3.9. The extension shown in Figure 2 encroaches across the 45° line on plan view. However, if the extension is single storey only (Drawing A) it does not cut across the 45° rising plane from the centre of the neighbour's window, on elevation view. Therefore daylight and sunlight levels are unlikely to be significantly adversely affected. If the proposal is a two-storey extension (Drawing B) then it breaks the 45° rising plane from the centre of the neighbour's window and is more likely to be unacceptable. The 45° angle is measured from centre point of the window or the centre point of patio doors.

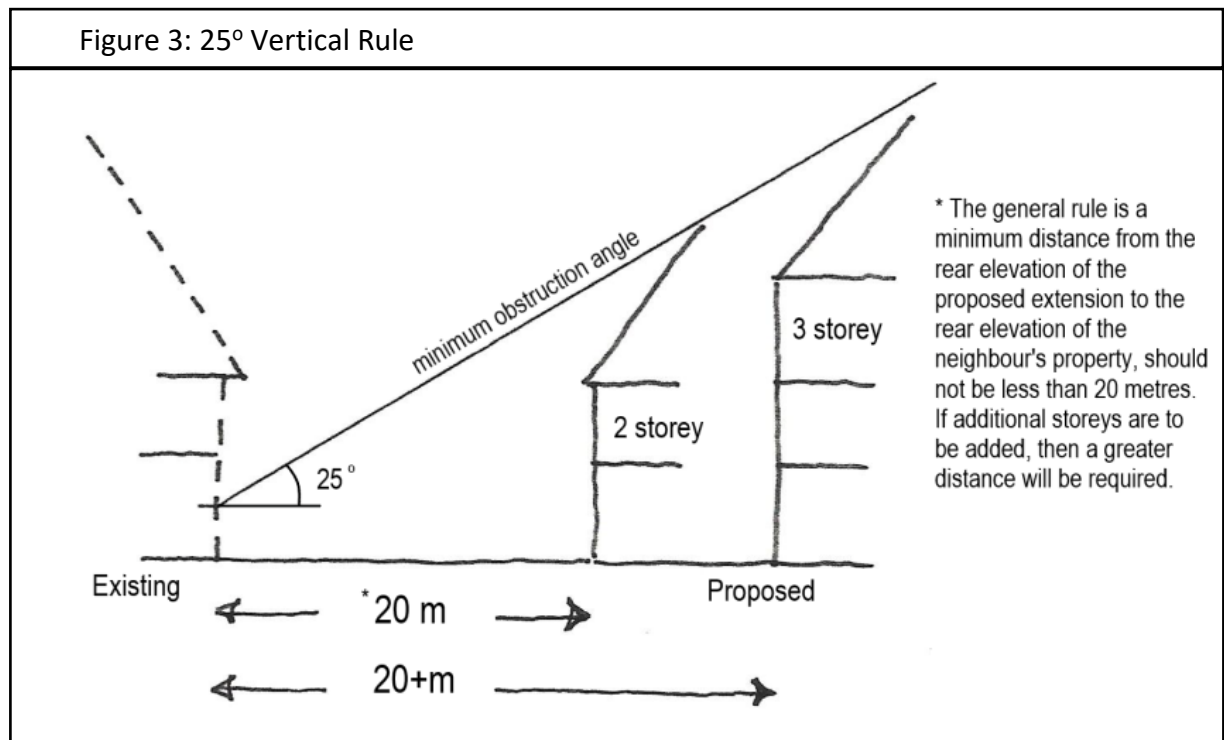
Figure 2: The 45° Vertical Rule



The 25° Vertical Rule

- 3.10. When dealing with rear-to-rear relationship development, where a proposal faces an existing neighbouring property's habitable room windows, the 25° rule should be used (see Figure 3). A line taken from the centre point of the neighbouring window, or patio doors, on the ground floor level of the rear elevation, should be drawn at 25° to the ground.
- 3.11. If this line is interrupted by the development opposite, it does not mean that daylight and sunlight levels will be below standard. However, it means that further checks should be carried out using BRE's detailed daylight and sunlight tests. In any event, a minimum separation distance between two-storey neighbouring rear elevations should generally be 20 metres. Additional distance is likely to be needed if the proposed extension is greater than two storeys (see Figure 3).

- 3.12. This guidance may also be used to assess the impact of extensions on side windows where they are the main means of lighting a habitable room. In doing so, account will be taken of the impact of existing buildings.



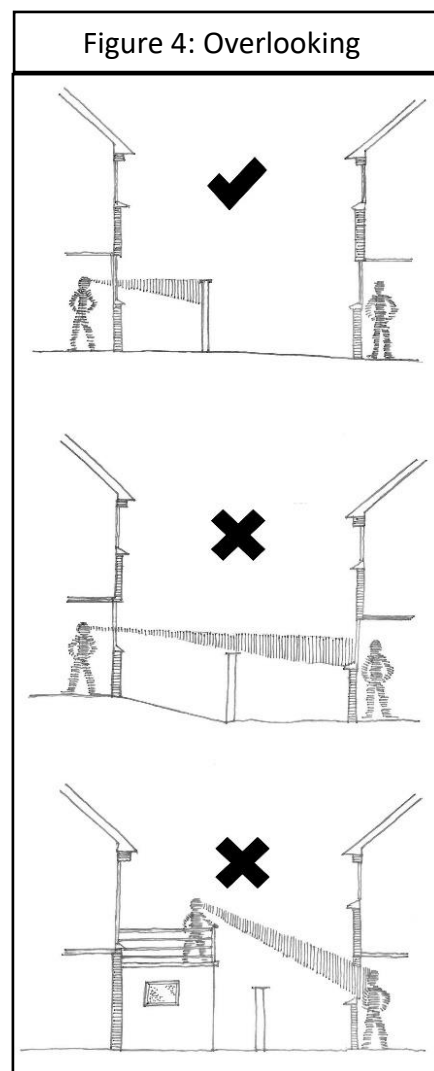
Overlooking/Overbearing Development

Overlooking

3.13. An extension should not result in any substantial loss of privacy to adjoining dwellings and gardens. To prevent overlooking, side windows above ground floor level or others with views over boundary fences or hedges directly into neighbouring houses should be avoided. However obscure glazed windows to bathrooms or high level windows (i.e. internal sill of 1.7m/5'6") to other rooms may be acceptable in such situations.

3.14. It needs to be remembered that under the Building Regulations there may be a requirement for a minimum size of window and/or for a window to be openable. If so, then this could give rise to significant overlooking and it will not be acceptable on planning grounds.

3.15. A ground floor level side window may be acceptable where a fence or other boundary screen would stand between it and the neighbouring property. Much will depend upon the height of the fence and the respective ground floor levels of the properties concerned (see Figure 4).

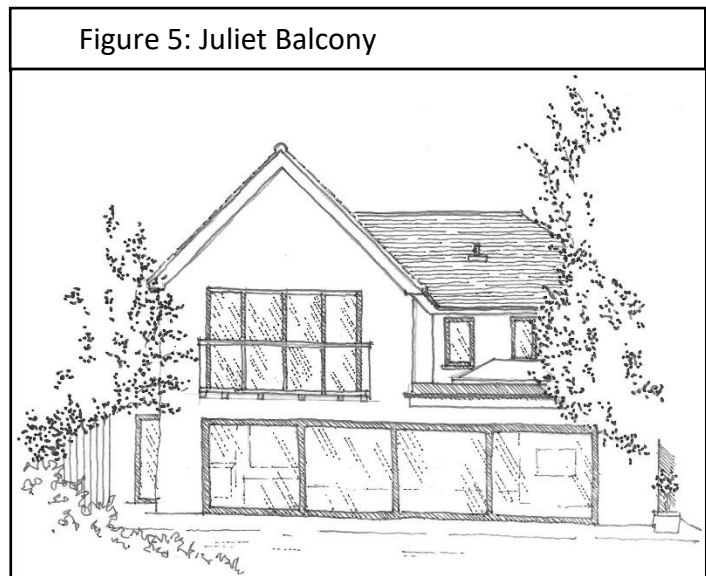


Balconies

3.16. Balconies will only be acceptable where the applicant has demonstrated (through the submission of appropriate plans) that there would be no resultant significant overlooking upon the surrounding neighbouring properties and their gardens. Obscuring side screens of a minimum height from the floor of the balcony to 1.7 m can assist in avoiding overlooking. Notwithstanding any privacy issues, balconies may also give rise to a loss of amenity by way of noise and disturbance.

Juliet Balconies

- 3.17. The Council receives many objections during the planning application process regarding house extension proposals which include Juliet balconies. Juliet balconies can be either sliding or inward-opening patio type doors at first or second floor level and have a safety balustrade flush with the doors (see Figure 5). This type of fenestration is treated in much the same way as an ordinary window and not in the same way as a step-out balcony is (see Figure 4 showing a step-out balcony).



Where a Juliet balcony is proposed in an extension and where it directly faces neighbouring properties and would cause overlooking, these are likely to be unacceptable and should be avoided. Where a Juliet balcony is in an elevation which looks over the garden of the application house, these are less likely to be of concern.

Overbearing Development

- 3.18. The effect of an extension on a neighbour's view (near or distant views) is not a material matter in the consideration of a planning application. However, an extension should not appear unduly prominent or visually dominating from the neighbour's property. Much will depend upon the individual circumstances (such as differing ground levels, design and the scale of the proposal) and the degree of harm caused to the amenities of the neighbouring property. Meeting the 45° and 25° "rules of thumb", described previously, and choice of roof design is usually likely to avoid problems of overbearing development.

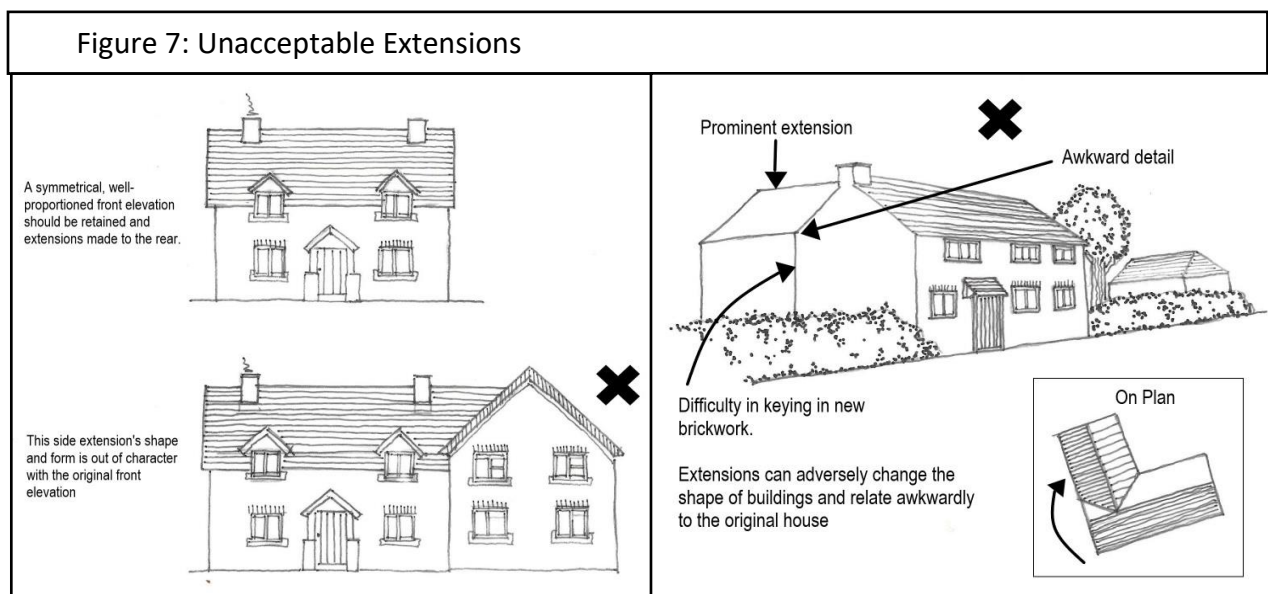
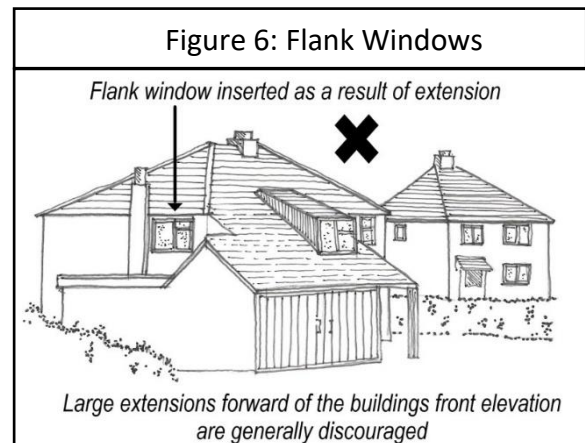
4. Respecting the Character of the Property

Shape and Form of Extension

4.1. The size of the extension should not be excessive in relation to the existing house. Consequently it may be necessary to reduce its scale. Alternatively breaking up a large extension into a series of smaller parts may reduce its impact.

4.2. In the countryside, extensions are further restricted and are not permitted if they are disproportionate to the original dwelling (you may wish to enquire about this using the Council's pre-application planning advice).

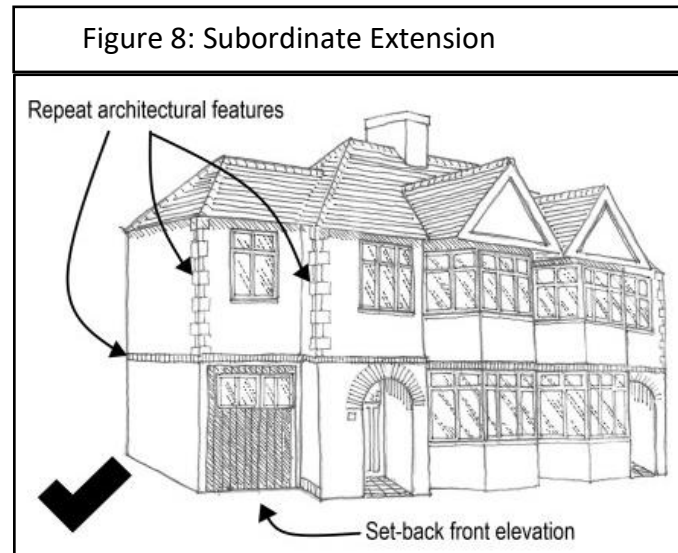
4.3. Extensions which detract from the overall shape and style of the original building will not normally be acceptable.



4.4. There are primarily two methods that the Council receives for handling the form of extensions so that they harmonise with the original appearance of the house:

Method 1: Subordination

- 4.5. Making the extension subordinate to the house minimises its impact and enables the form of the original house to be appreciated. This approach is appropriate for a house which is part of a larger symmetrical building such as a semi-detached pair and where the original form of the building should not be altered. (see Figure 8).



- 4.6. It involves setting the extension's front elevation back (at least 0.5 metre, but often more) or a side elevation in from the original flank elevation and creating a lower ridge to the roof.

Method 2: Integration

- 4.7. Designing the extension, for example, by matching the proportions, detailing and fenestration sizes means that it is not readily recognisable as an extension. This is usually only acceptable where it does not affect symmetry. Therefore it tends to be more successful with detached and individually designed houses. (see Figure 9).

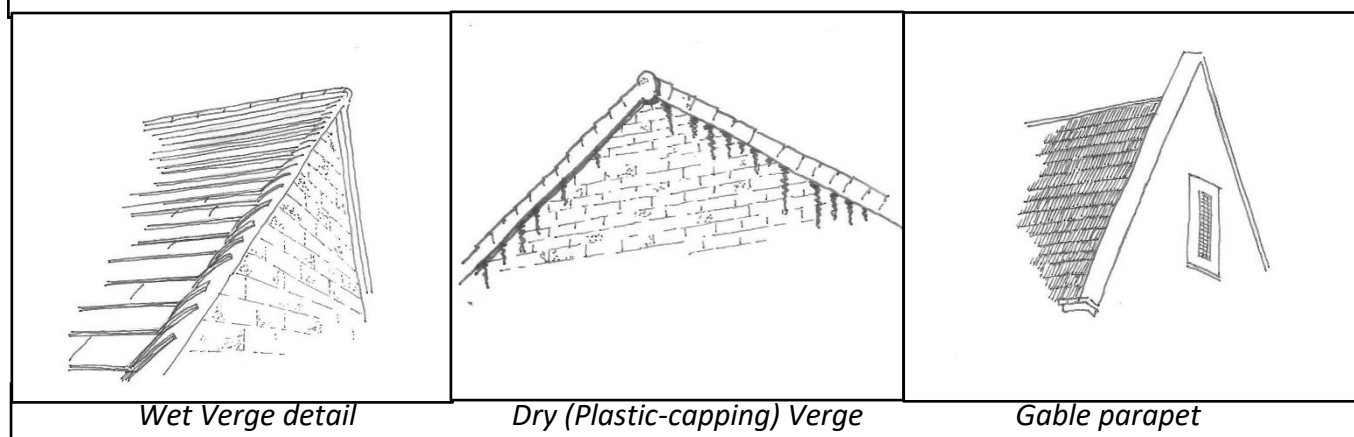


- 4.8. The first method is usually easier to achieve satisfactorily. The second method can, in some cases, be inappropriate especially where the extension spoils the original proportions or symmetry of the building or where it sits awkwardly with houses which were originally of similar design (such as on semi-detached houses).

Sympathetic Design

- 4.9. Extensions may look out of place because they do not incorporate the design features of the original house. These can be the proportions and design of the windows or the omission of decorative brickwork or barge board design which are characteristic of the house. Attention to these details is often the key to the successful integration of a design for a new extension.
- 4.10. In terms of attention to detail, it is usually appropriate to ensure that the new development marries with the old. This can be done by replicating the heads and sill brickwork, brick course and bond style, quoin work, ridge verge and eaves finishes.
- 4.11. Verges are an important architectural detail to consider when you are designing a sympathetic house extension. Verges are the external edge detailing of a roof for gabled roof designs. Three versions of this detail are known as Wet or Dry Verges, or a Gable parapet.
- 4.12. 'Wet verges' are an attractive detail where the edge of the roof tiles are visible and are bedded in place with mortar. A dry-verge is a modern cap, often plastic, that covers the join between the roof tiles and the top of the brickwork. These are often found on new build properties but are usually not a suitable or sympathetic option for extensions to traditional properties. These plastic caps can also cause drip staining to run down the gable end which is an unattractive detail and a maintenance issue.
- 4.13. Another gable end detail is a gable parapet. These are a brick upstand that extends the gable end above the level of the roof tiles (often with a stone cap). Gable parapets would be a suitable option where the existing property also has this gable detail and this would be preferable over dry verges. Figure 10 shows images of these three options. Using a wet-verge or gable parapet will often

Figure 10: Gable Verge detailing



ensure that the gable-ended extension will sit comfortably with the existing dwelling.

- 4.14. The proportions, size and design of new windows should generally echo those of the main house. Avoid unsympathetic window frames and inappropriate opening formats, such as top-hung sash windows to replace or 'match' rise-and-fall sash windows and make sure that the new window has the same "reveal" as other windows in the house.

- 4.15. The reveal around a window is the distance the window frame is set back from the face of the wall (see Figure 11). It adds definition and depth to a facade and provides some weather protection.

- 4.16. It will be desirable for windows to be positioned to align with the pattern of the existing house and conform to the original symmetry (see Figure 12). The exception will be some period houses where the irregular positioning of windows may be part of their charm.

Figure 11: Window Reveal

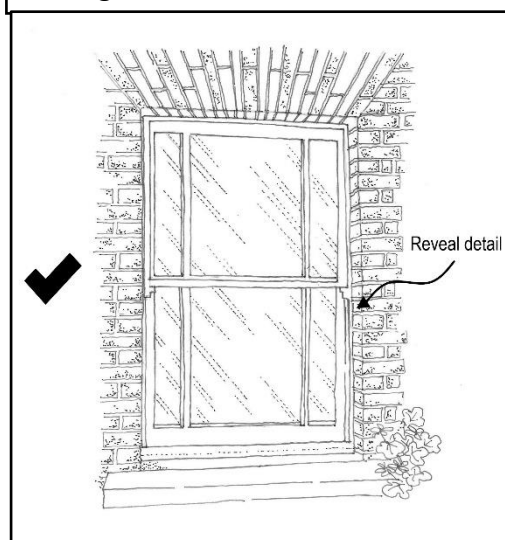
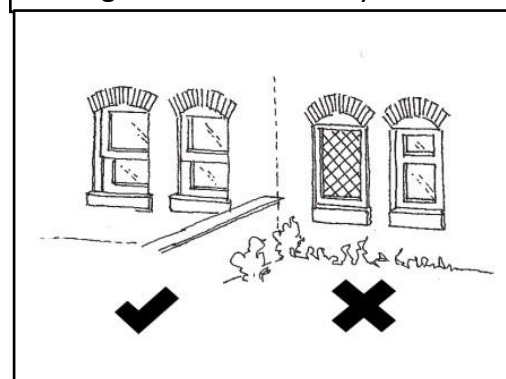


Figure 12: Window Styles



Modern / Innovative Design

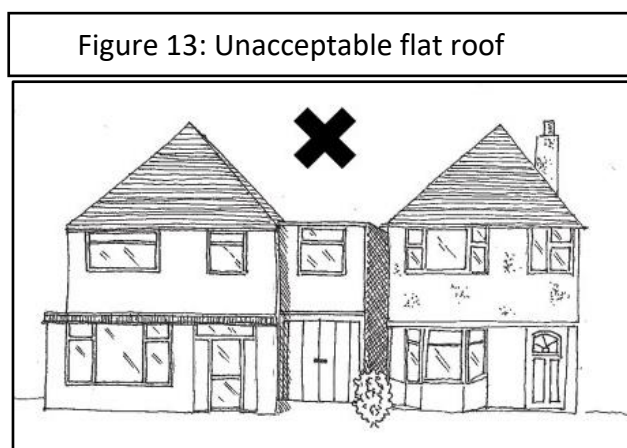
- 4.17. While this document mainly focuses on the traditional good built form, reflecting the majority of planning applications that the Council receives, contemporary, innovative and modern extensions can form striking and interesting additions to existing dwellings. The Council is supportive of innovative and contemporary modern design where it is appropriate. This guide is not intended to stifle imaginative architectural designs but these will be assessed on their individual merits in relation to the host dwelling.
- 4.18. Modern extensions should not detract from the character of the host dwelling but acknowledge, embrace and complement it. Examples of where modern architecture can work with existing dwellings are ultra-modern glass box extensions which enable you to see the original house through the glazing; or a proposal that replicates an existing key roof form and/or detail on a new addition at a subordinate scale.

- 4.19. However, modern design will not always be successful and can be inappropriate for some dwellings. This area of design is highly subjective and bespoke to each dwelling. Where a contemporary design is proposed, an application should be accompanied by a Design Statement justifying the approach taken and explaining how the design, notwithstanding its contemporary approach, respects the character of the existing dwelling.

Roof Design

- 4.20. The roof design for an extension is important because it will determine the overall shape of the extension and the contribution it makes to the character of the house and streetscene.

- 4.21. All two-storey extensions should have pitched roofs to match the existing house. Two-storey flat roofs will not normally be acceptable especially where they may be seen by the general public. Similarly, single-storey extensions which are visible from a public area should normally have pitched roofs.



- 4.22. Single storey extensions with flat roofs can detract from the character of the property and may suffer from long-term maintenance problems. They may be acceptable if located on the rear of the property where they are not publicly seen, where they have a decorative brick parapet perimeter upstand or where the scale of the extension needs to be kept to the minimum but they are not encouraged.
- 4.23. Dummy pitched roofs which take the form of a tiled upstand along the front wall of an extension should be avoided. This old fashioned artificial decoration is rarely successful especially when the outer corner is visible.
- 4.24. A crown flat roof, where the 'flat' area is not visible within the streetscene or from wider views and appears to be a fully pitched roof, are not generally encouraged. An important detail to consider with crown roofs are the ridge tiles. Lead/felt overlapping the top tiles is an unattractive detail which stands out in the streetscene and highlights that there is a flat roof - this should be avoided. Ridge tiles should be used instead and, if water outlets are required to drain the flat roof section, outlets in the tiled roof slopes are preferable.

- 4.25. New roof ridges should not exceed the height of the original and should normally be lower. It is generally advisable to copy the shape and angles of the existing roof. Consequently, if the existing roof is fully-hipped or gabled the extension should be the same. Barn-hipped roofs on extensions can look out of place on the host dwelling and/or in the locality particularly if located within a housing development of similarly designed dwellings. The eaves of two-storey extensions should normally line up with those of the existing house and the pitch of the roof should also be the same.

Figure 14: Roof ridges



- 4.26. The colour and shape of new tiles and slates on pitched roofs should match those of the existing building. This is essential where the new roof connects directly to the existing. In such cases it may be possible to reuse some tiles from where the roof connection is made onto the front of the extension.

External Materials

- 4.27. The choice of external materials of an extension is crucial for a successful project and for the future maintenance of the building. In general, in areas where there is a strong sense of character through the use of particular materials, extensions and alterations should use a materials-to-match approach. Where appropriate the introduction of high-quality contemporary materials may be used to offer a contrast to the appearance of traditional materials and provide a clear distinction from the original fabric.
- 4.28. A brick choice should always be as close as possible to the appearance, colour and texture of the original brickwork to avoid an unsightly disjointed appearance. Render is a popular and cost-effective way of covering a join to an existing building, but this cost saving can have disbenefits such as on the wider streetscene, on the heritage of a building, and they can also have an increased maintenance cost associated with it over a brick finish.
- 4.29. On a historic brick built building render as a new external finish is not generally advised, and if the building is Listed or is a Non-Designated-Heritage-Asset, the Council's Historic Environment Officer will comment on the external material choices during the planning process.
- 4.30. The roofing material is also crucial to the overall aesthetic and impact of a proposal, not only on the building, but also on the streetscene. Changing original clay tiles for example to a concrete interlocking tile or a slate can have a detrimental impact upon the immediate locality and will be considered during the planning process.

Architectural detailing and features

- 4.31. Architectural decorative features and detailing on buildings can significantly contribute to the appearance of a dwelling. Design proposals should take existing architectural detailing on the dwelling into account when designing the proposed extension and how new details, or replication, may be introduced to add interest and quality into the design.
- 4.32. When rebuilding part of an existing property, the continuation of brick plinths, string courses, brick bond patterns, decorative detailing, bargeboards and facias should be integrated into the design.
- 4.33. Decorative features such as terracotta panels, carved bricks, dentils, glazed tiles, decorative ridge tiles and finials, lintels or plaques should be retained, replicated or restored, if damaged.
- 4.34. Functional features, such as chimneys help provide rhythm and continuity to a streetscene. Where chimneys are no longer used to service fireplaces, they can provide ventilation and reduce condensation within a home. Where they contribute to the original design, their retention is strongly encouraged. Where a new chimney would be appropriate to the scale and position of an extension, they can help integrate the extension into the setting and provide a functional use.
- 4.35. Adding new contemporary features and detailing can work where they respond to the design of the proposal, the existing dwelling and the character of the surrounding area.



Figure 4.30a: Contemporary chimney with brick detailing



Figure 4.30b: Decorative stringer course, brick bond and bracketed cornice



Figure 4.30c: Decorative gable bargeboards



Figure 4.30d: Replicating railings

5. Particular Types of Extension

Single-Storey Extensions

5.1. It is important that the design of single-storey extensions should respect the form, character, period and style of your existing property, particularly when seen from the streetscene.

5.2. Single-storey side extensions should generally have a pitched roof that matches the original house. Additionally, a one-metre gap should be retained between the side elevation of the extension and the boundary.

However, in some circumstances, single-storey side extensions will be allowed to the boundary where it is shown that there is no detrimental impact on the neighbouring property and on the streetscene.

5.3. 'Wrap-around' extensions should have matching pitched roofs on all sides (particularly when seen in the streetscene) and should avoid any flat roof sections or 'crown-roofs'.

5.4. Side facing windows should be avoided unless located on a corner plot (see Figure 16) or it can be demonstrated that there will be no adverse privacy concerns on a neighbouring property.

5.5. Innovative designs for rear extensions may be acceptable where they do not harm the character of the existing dwelling, its setting or are overbearing on neighbouring properties.

Figure 15: Roof respecting host

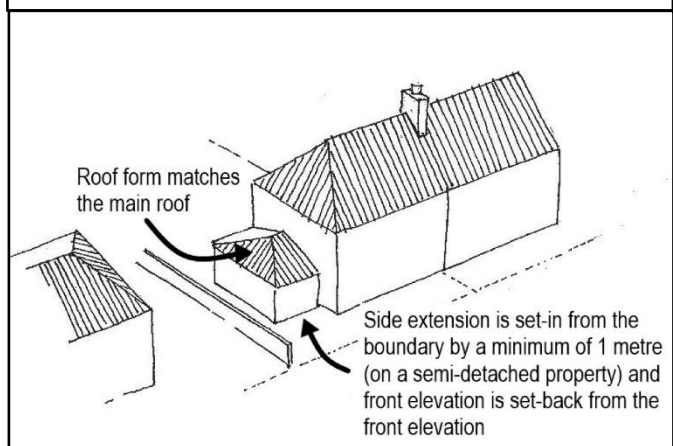
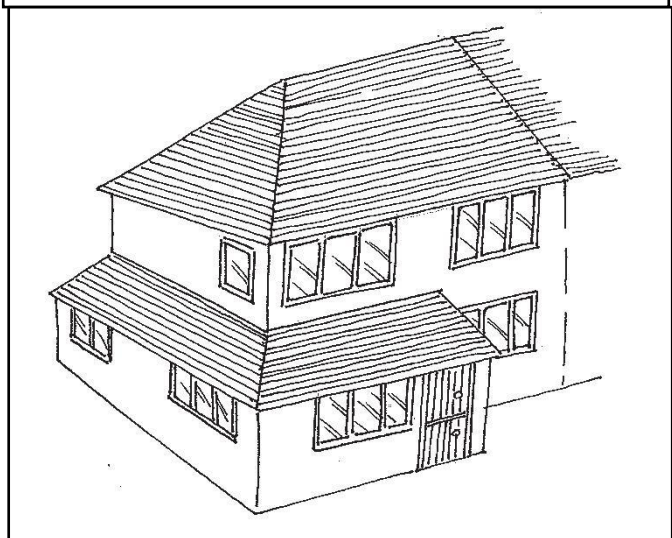


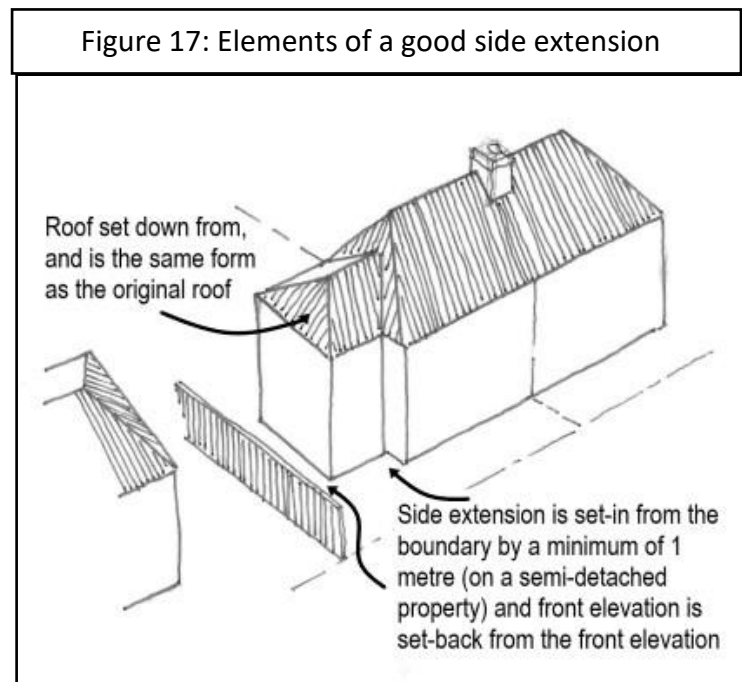
Figure 16: Wrap-around extension



Two-Storey Extensions

- 5.6. Two-storey extensions should normally appear smaller in scale and proportion to the main dwelling and should be set down from the ridge of the existing house and set back from the front elevation.

- 5.7. An exception to this that could be acceptable is where design 'Method 2 Integration' is being considered: (see page 18) where this is on a detached dwelling and where there is space on the plot to maintain sufficient separation to the boundary and neighbouring properties.

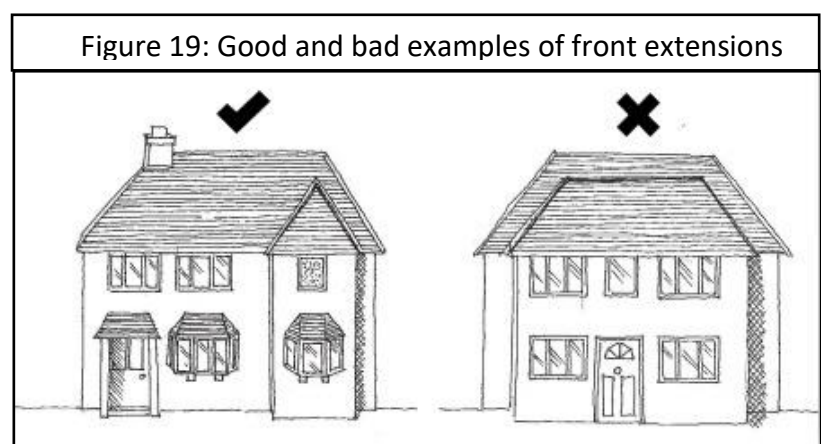


- 5.8. All roofs to two-storey extensions should be fully pitched to match the existing house. Flat roofs will not normally be acceptable. All proposals should follow the general 45° and 25° rules (see the section on Daylight).
- 5.9. When on a corner plot, extra care needs to be given to both elevations that face the streetscene. This will often involve a greater separation to the side boundary and additional thought to the fenestration and detailing (such as brick banding) on the side elevation to avoid a blank façade.

Front Extensions and Porches

Front extensions

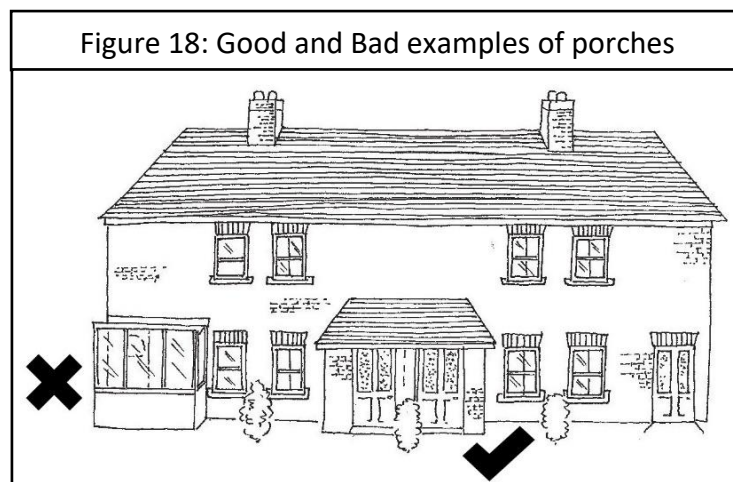
- 5.10. As a general rule, front extensions, are unacceptable and will be resisted as they can significantly alter the character of the dwelling and surrounding area. Where there is a row of properties with a uniform building line and of a similar design, a front extension (apart from porches), whether it is single or two storeys, will often break this building line making them unduly prominent in the streetscene.



- 5.11. Where the property is in a street with no uniform building line and the design and era of properties is significantly varied, a front extension will be assessed on its merits and may only be acceptable where they are respectful of the proportions and design of the main property.
- 5.12. All two-storey extensions should follow the general 45° and 25° rules (see the section on Daylight).

Porches

- 5.13. The first impression of a property is often set by its entrance. The aim should be to make the porch or entrance relate to the character of the house. This is achieved by ensuring that its style, proportions and materials match those of the house. Ready-made uPVC or Resin porch canopies may be cheaper but they may not suit the style of a particular house.



- 5.14. Whilst owners may like to give the house greater identity, the addition or the style of a porch in a terrace can look out of place and spoil the overall appearance of the terrace, especially when different styles and sizes are constructed (see Figure 18).

Loft Conversions and Roof Extensions

- 5.15. Loft conversions are a popular method of creating extra space and can be achieved through relatively minor alterations. Sometimes they will not require planning permission. However, if the house has already been extended and dormer windows are proposed, or restrictive planning conditions apply to the property, permission may be required. Dormer windows on the front of the house will need permission.
- 5.16. More modern properties and properties within Conservation Areas may have restrictions on their permitted development rights, or may have had their permitted development rights removed entirely/or in part by a planning condition when permission was granted.

- 5.17. Some buildings do not lend themselves to any form of roof extension as it would spoil their character and proportions. If the roof slope is too shallow for the rooms it may not be possible to accommodate an extension without creating unsightly, large, flat roofed, box-like dormers.
- 5.18. The roof to any dwelling is an important feature of the building and therefore interruptions to it should be kept to a minimum. In practice, there are two ways of giving light and ventilation to rooms in the roof: rooflights or dormer windows.

Rooflights

- 5.19. Caution should be exercised before inserting rooflights. The roof of your property and others in the streetscene forms a significant part of the area's character.
- 5.20. Large square rooflights can be incongruous and may not reflect the proportions of windows in the rest of the house. The narrower and more vertically proportioned rooflights are preferable, as are those set flush into the plane of the roof and which do not protrude above it. This is particularly important in the case of historic buildings or in Conservation Areas.
- 5.21. The number of rooflights will depend on the size of the dwelling, but they should not dominate the roof slope or look cramped. As a general rule, the location of the rooflights should correspond with the windows below them.

Figure 20: Good example of rooflights

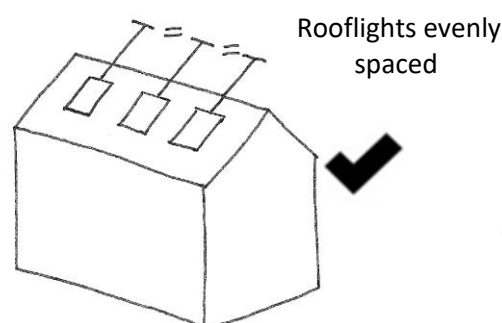
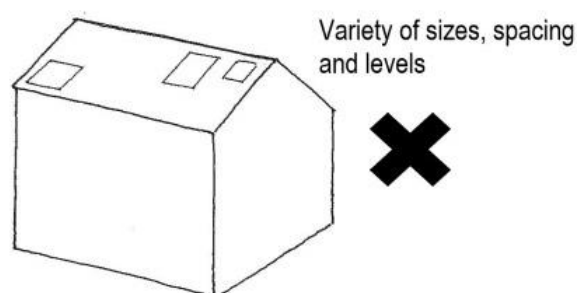


Figure 21: Bad example of rooflights



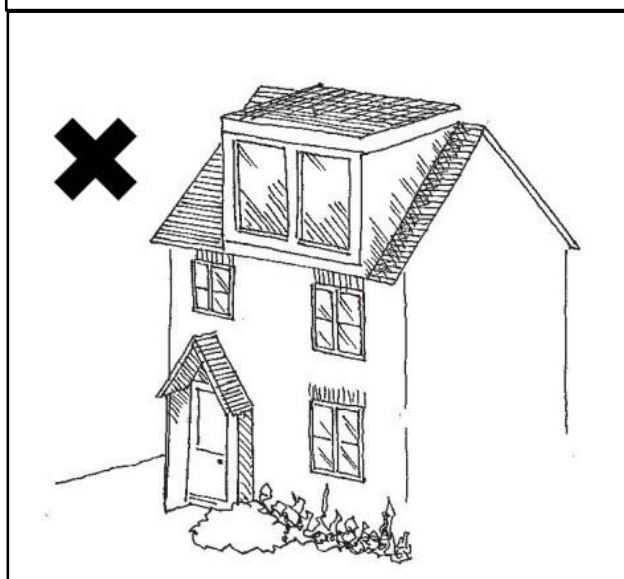
- 5.22. As a rule of thumb roof lights should be set down a minimum of 0.5m from the ridge and set a minimum of 1m up from the eaves.

Dormer Windows

5.23. A successful roof extension depends on achieving a combination of form, materials, window design and detailing which is sympathetic to the character of the existing building. It should be clearly subsidiary to the original building in order to reduce its public prominence. Positions on the front of the house should be avoided.

5.24. Large single-flat roofed dormers tend to create unattractive boxlike features which dominate the roof slope (see Figure 22). The Council will resist these where permission is required.

Figure 22: Bad dormer window



5.25. It is better to construct two dormer windows that are small, vertically proportioned and have pitched roofs (See Figure 24). They should not have wide cheeks as this spoils their proportions. The style and size of window should reflect the existing windows in the main house, and be proportionately smaller in size to reflect the subordinate role of the roof in comparison with the main dwelling.

5.26. The aim should be to retain the maximum area of uninterrupted roof slope. The construction of too many dormers is likely to undermine the character of the original house.

Figure 23: Poorly designed dormer

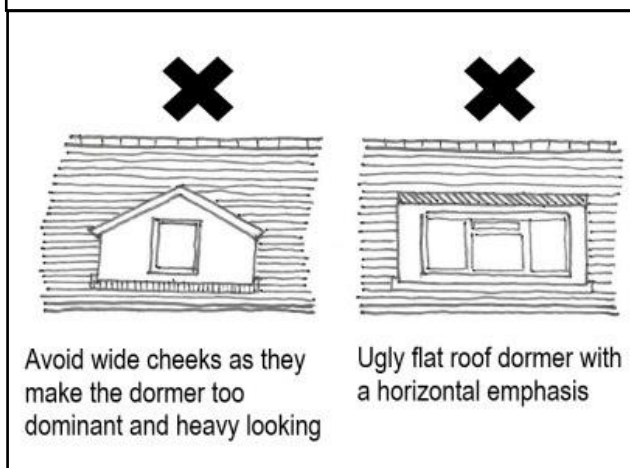
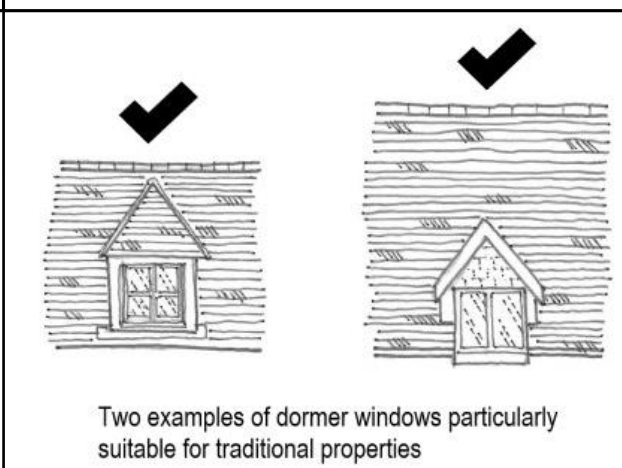


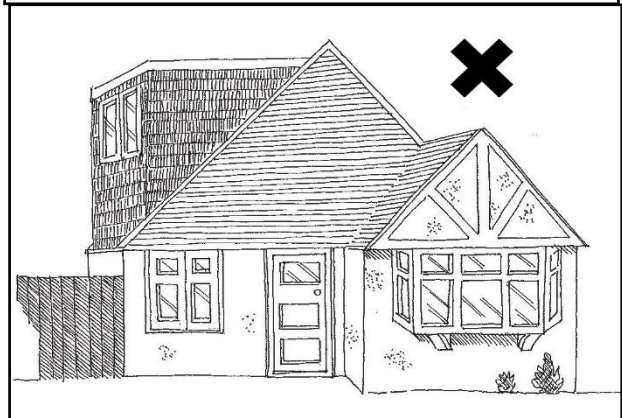
Figure 24: Well-designed dormer



5.27. Exceptions may occur for flat roofed dormer windows where they are small and highly detailed, complement the character and are historically appropriate to the style of property. Dormer roof extensions which extend above the existing ridge height or wrap around the existing hips of roofs can be particularly unattractive and should be avoided.

5.28. Similarly, they should not be sited to the side of a roof slope where it would overlook a neighbouring property or upset the symmetry of the building.

Figure 25: Poor dormer window example



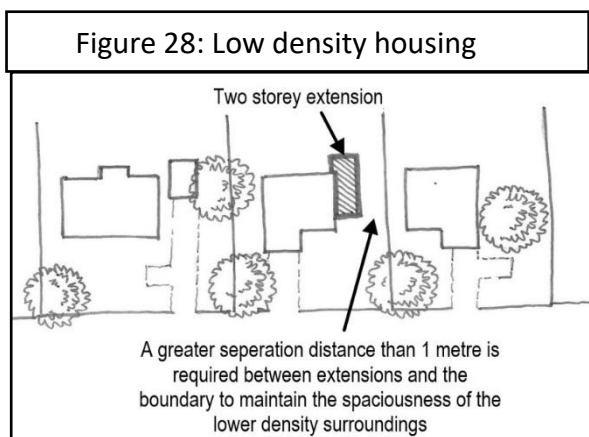
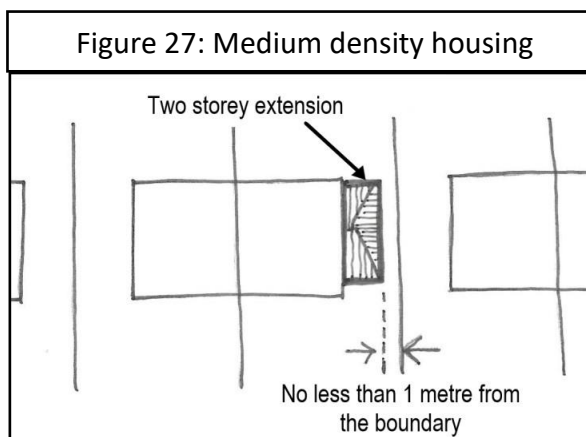
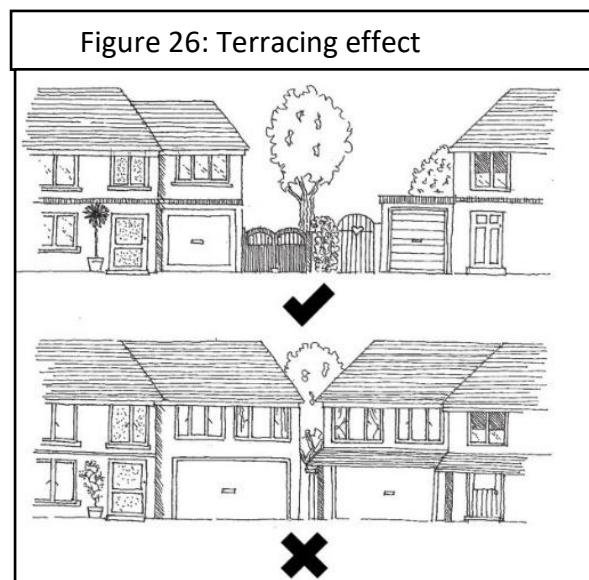
6. Respecting the Character of the Locality

Streetscene

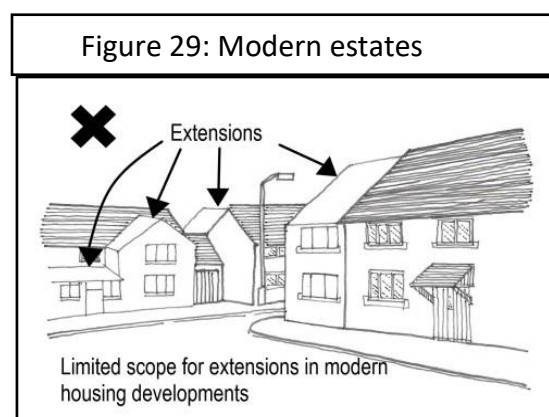
6.1. The impact upon the streetscene is a key consideration when considering a two-storey side extension. The infilling of gaps between houses, particularly between rows of semi-detached and terraced properties, can, if repeated, cause a terracing effect which is likely to harm the character of a street. It is therefore essential to retain sufficient space around extensions which are visible from the street.

6.2. The separation distances to boundaries and neighbouring properties will depend upon the density and spacing of houses in the street or locality. Therefore, while two-storey extensions should normally be at least one metre away from a side boundary, for example end-of-terrace and semi-detached houses, this distance will often need to be greater, sometimes substantially greater, for example, detached houses.

6.3. Parts of Mole Valley are characterised by large detached properties in wide plots and proposed extensions will be expected to maintain a level of spacing that is consistent with the overall character of the area, whether that is single-storey or two-storey extensions. As a general rule, the larger the house, the greater the space around it will be needed. (see figures 27 and 28).

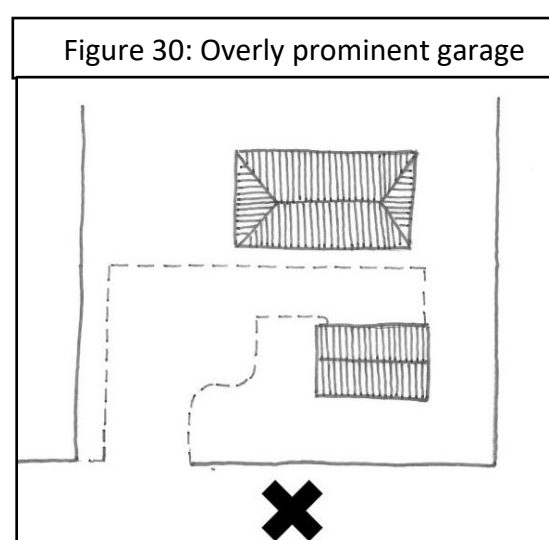


- 6.4. More recently built housing estates have been developed at their outset to the maximum potential. The scope to assimilate extensions is therefore limited if the character and openness of the estate is to be kept. Furthermore, conditions are often imposed on planning permissions for developments such as these to remove the permitted development rights which otherwise would exist. This enables the Council to consider proposed extensions individually in these tight situations. If you live on a modern estate of this type, it may be worth applying for pre-application planning advice to avoid delays or a refusal at the application stage.



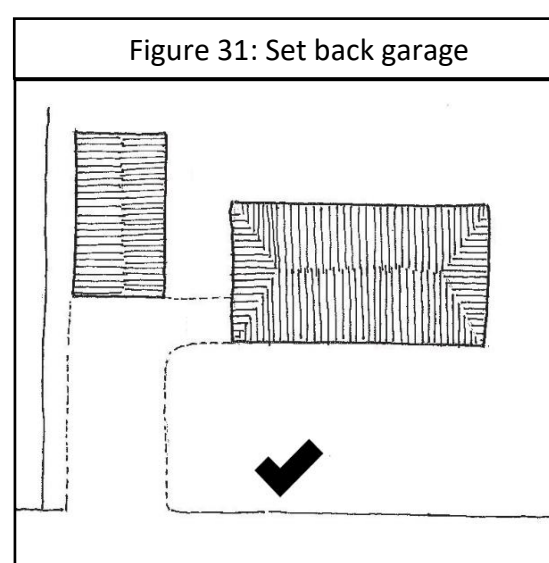
Garages

- 6.5. Garages, like extensions, are usually better set back from the face of the existing house. It is a utility structure which should not dominate the appearance of the house (see Figure 30).



- 6.6. A freestanding garage should be designed in sympathy with the house, be built of similar materials and have a similar roof pitch. It should not generally be in the front garden as it would have undue prominence at the expense of the character and setting of the house.

- 6.7. A garage at the side of property should normally be set back from the front wall of the house unless it is incorporated into the dwellings front porch all under a pitched roof in an integrated design (see Figure 31).



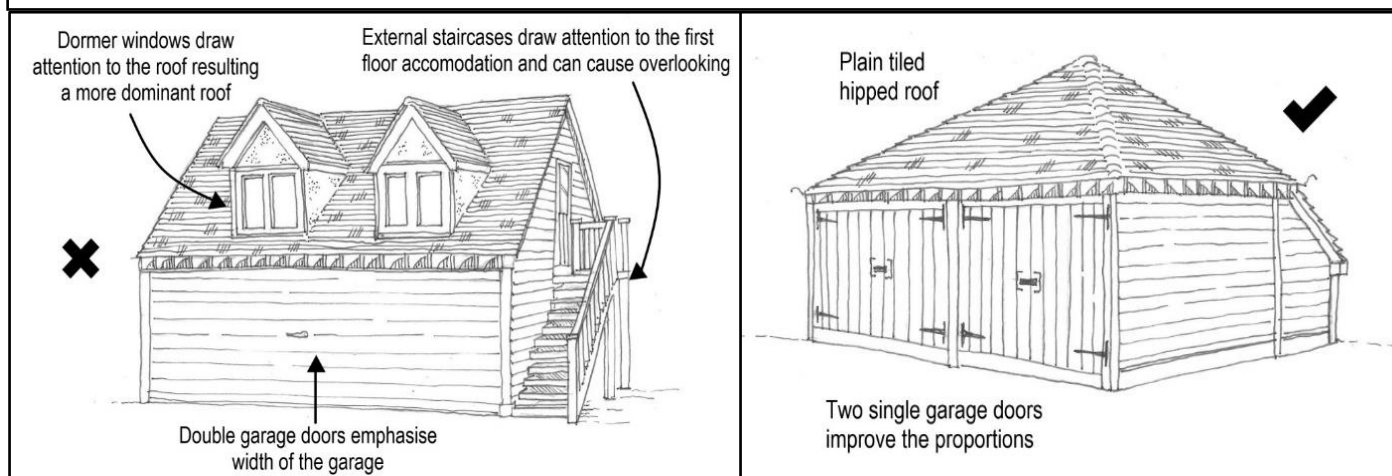
- 6.8. Particularly in rural areas or close to a neighbouring property, the roofs to double garages should be pitched back on all four sides or, in the case of a single garage, dual or fully pitched. This will help to minimise their impact.

- 6.9. Rooms above garages and external staircases increase their bulk and prominence and can cause overlooking of neighbouring properties so are generally discouraged. In rural locations, you

should consider an open fronted substantially constructed car port under a traditional tiled pitched roof as an alternative to a garage.

- 6.10. The design of the garage door will influence the overall appearance of the garage and should relate to the character of the house.
- 6.11. Timber rather than metal doors are preferred for traditional properties particularly in rural areas. Sometimes the proportions may relate better to the existing property if two single garage doors separated by a brick pillar are provided instead of wider double garage doors. Vertical as opposed to horizontal boarding to the doors may also be more suitable.

Figure 32: Good and bad garages



- 6.12. Proposals to convert a garage to living accommodation, possibly in conjunction with extensions, will need to consider the impact upon parking on the site. Proposals which are likely to result in replacing front gardens largely by hard surfaces for parked vehicles will be resisted where permission is required. Smaller front gardens occupied by parked vehicles are normally damaging to the character of residential streets and especially to Conservation Areas.
- 6.13. Often, the conversion of garages will be more successful in appearance terms if the garage doors are retained for aesthetic reasons, filling in of the garage doors with blockwork and windows can look clunky with unsuccessful window proportions compared to the host dwelling. In all circumstances, visible entrance doors will be resisted (especially on the elevations facing the road) as these alter the hierarchy and utilitarian nature of the building by highlighting the conversion. If an additional entrance door is required, it should be subtle and placed on a side or rear elevation.

Driveways and Electric Vehicle Charging

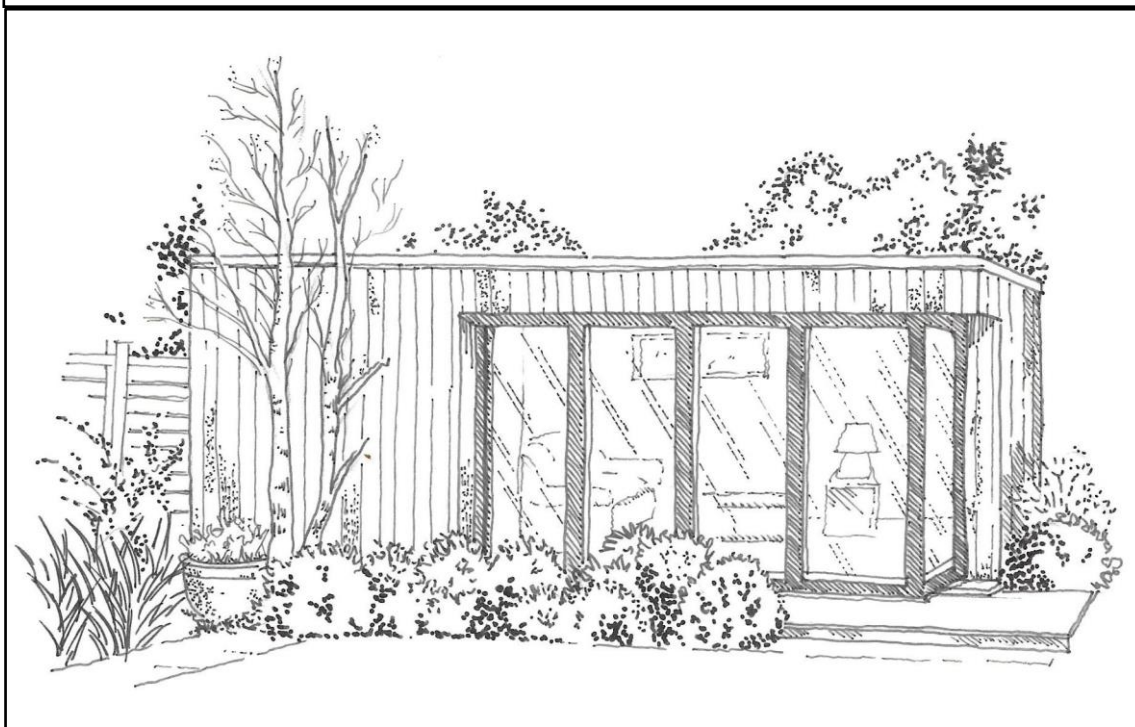
- 6.14. You may wish to consider installing an electric vehicle charging point in your new garage, driveway or car parking area, if appropriate. This may be possible under Permitted Development, if certain requirements are met. See Section 2 of this Guide to understand how to find out whether your Permitted Development rights are intact. You can find out more about Permitted Development on the [Planning Portal website](#). You can find out more about electric vehicle charging points on the [Energy Saving Trust website](#).
- 6.15. In terms of paving your driveway, in general, you should use porous surfacing (e.g. gravel or permeable paving) which allows water to drain through in order to avoid surface water flooding. The sub-base material is as important as the surfacing when it comes to permeability, permeable block paving over a concrete base, for example, will not be appropriate as the concrete base may still cause surface water flooding.
- 6.16. Paving a driveway may be possible under Permitted Development, if certain requirements are met. See Section 2 of this Guide to understand how to find out whether your Permitted Development Rights are intact. You can find out more about Permitted Development on the [Planning Portal website](#). You should also think carefully about the balance of hard and soft landscaping in your front garden and retain enough planting to soften the impact on the environment and the street scene.

Outbuildings

- 6.17. An outbuilding, which in planning terms is a garden shed, home office, gym, playroom etc, but NOT separately let living accommodation, is usually better set away from the streetscene and certainly set back from the face of the existing house. It is a utility structure which should not dominate the appearance of the house or garden.
- 6.18. Outbuildings often do not require planning permission (see the section below about Permitted Development Rights), but only where they meet certain criteria (see Planning Portal for more details).
- 6.19. The size of an outbuilding should be proportionate to the main dwelling but it should not be able to be used independently from the main dwelling with all of the facilities necessary to form a separate dwelling (i.e cooking, washing and living accommodation). It is therefore essential for at least one main facility (usually the kitchen and/or bathroom) to only be located in the main house (also see the Annex section below).
- 6.20. Unlike garages, which are more likely to be seen from the street, outbuildings can be designed with a more modern appearance (see Figure 33) where there are no policy justifications for them to respect the character of the existing house or surrounding area.

- 6.21. Windows and doors should primarily be located on the garden facing elevations to avoid overlooking the neighbouring plots.

Figure 33: Modern outbuilding



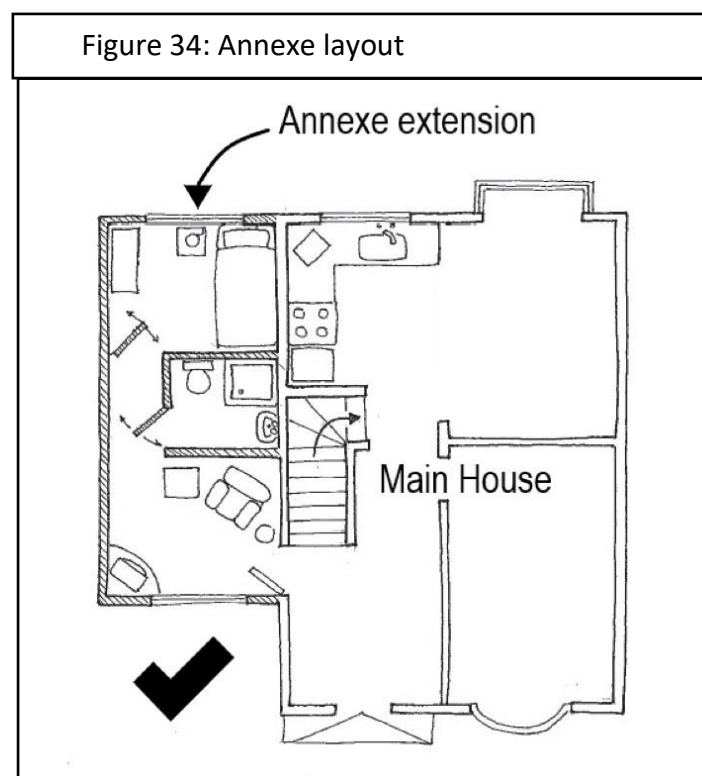
Permitted Development Rights for Outbuildings

- 6.22. You should check whether Permitted Development Rights for outbuildings apply to your house as they can sometimes have been removed by planning condition, which would mean planning permission is required to be sought.
- 6.23. If you wish to have formal confirmation that your outbuilding proposal does not require planning permission, you can submit an application for a Lawful Development Certificate (LDC) to the Council by the external Planning Portal website: <https://www.planningportal.co.uk/applications>

Annexes

- 6.24. Annexes (such as a granny annexe), unlike outbuildings (home offices, gyms, playrooms etc) can provide additional and varied accommodation for dependants and families.
- 6.25. Proposals to build an annexe will be assessed on their individual merit however, as with any other extension, they must comply with the relevant design guidance outlined in this document.
- 6.26. As well as respecting the character of the property and streetscene, annexes should be attached to the main home and avoid the appearance and creation of a separate independent dwelling.

- 6.27. Annexes must be connected internally to the rest of the house. The inclusion of a second front door and/or staircase for an annexe will be resisted (patio doors opening onto the back garden would be acceptable). At least one main facility, usually the kitchen, will be expected to be shared with the main dwelling (see Figure 34) and not be designed so that it is capable of being used as a separate dwelling.



- 6.28. Applications for detached buildings for the purpose of being used as an annexe will not normally be acceptable if this amounts to the creation of a self-contained independent dwelling.
- 6.29. An annexe must remain ancillary to the main house at all times and, where a proposed annexe is considered acceptable, planning conditions and/or a legal agreement may be required to ensure the accommodation remains ancillary in use to the main dwelling.

A Mole Valley which is
Fairer, Greener and provides
Opportunity for all

Document history

Version date	Key changes made	Consultees	Approved by
30 June 2025	Post Cabinet Call Over	Cabinet	Cabinet

Responsible Officer: David Webb

Last updated: 30 June 2025

Approval of changes: Cabinet

Next update due: n/a