

DUMFRIES AND  
GALLOWAY COUNCIL

# Local Development Plan

## Supplementary Guidance

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## *Alterations and Extensions to Houses*



## Contents

	Page
1. Introduction	2
2. General Design Principles	3
3. Massing, Scale, Design and External Materials	4
4. Overdevelopment of the Plot	9
5. Privacy and Amenity	9
6. Road Safety	11
7. Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings	11
Glossary	12

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This document provides detailed guidance in support of Local Development Plan (LDP) Policy H8: Alterations and Extensions to Houses which relates to the design and development of extensions and alterations (including other improvement works) to existing houses. Please note that for alterations to dwellings that are the subject of policies HE1 Listed Buildings and HE2 Conservation Areas, there will be additional details to consider (further guidance can be found in the Historic Built Environment Supplementary Guidance).
- 1.2 The Council recognises that householders may wish to extend or alter their homes to meet their needs. When making changes to buildings, it is important to consider how any extensions or alterations will change the appearance of the building, affect neighbouring properties and / or alter the streetscene and historic character.
- 1.3 Many people design an extension from the inside out by focusing on internal space rather than the external appearance of the building, often leading to a poor design approach which harms the appearance and character of the house and its surroundings.
- 1.4 Extensions and alterations, individually and cumulatively, have an impact upon townscape and amenity. No proposal is too small to have an impact and therefore the Council requires all applications to achieve high standards of design and amenity. It is important to note that not all houses can accommodate an extension. In some instances, there may simply be not enough space or the change would be too damaging to the structure or character of the original building.
- 1.5 This guidance provides advice on general design principles and the nature of the issues that will be taken into consideration in assessing the most common forms of development submitted in planning



applications. It is hoped that the advice contained in this supplementary guidance (SG) will help to avoid unnecessary delays when seeking planning permission and provide more objectivity, certainty and consistency in decision-making.

### **Policy H8: Alterations and Extensions to Houses**

Alterations and extensions to dwelling houses will be supported where:

- the massing, scale, design and external materials are sympathetic to the scale and character of the existing dwelling house and its immediate neighbourhood, such that they comply with the design guidance set out in supplementary guidance;
- the proposal would not result in the over development of the plot, with sufficient space remaining for garden ground;
- the proposal would not materially reduce the privacy or amenity of adjacent properties; and
- the proposal would not prejudice road safety.

This policy is supported by supplementary guidance.

- normally be based on simple rectangular forms with sloping roofs, avoiding the use of flat roofs; the roof pitch should match those on the main building
- normally use similar detailing and construction as the building being extended; for example, window openings should be of a similar size, proportion and shape to the existing ones normally use the same wall finishes as the original building; where this is not practical, render or harl using appropriate materials might be acceptable. (It is better for the extension to be honestly modern in this respect and the temptation to mould or trowel the render to simulate stonework should be avoided)
- retain the building’s principal architectural features and details
- not result in overdevelopment of the plot and retain a serviceable area of - private garden space -
- consider how an extension or other works might affect neighbouring properties and should avoid undue overlooking and loss of privacy, and loss of daylight and sunlight
- not be built in such a way that it reduces or precludes the possibility of on-site parking and providing that such provision does not detract from the amenity and character of the house, gardens and streetscene

## **2.0 General Design Principles**

2.1 Extensions and alterations to buildings should not overwhelm or otherwise dominate the original building by being too large, out of proportion or inappropriately detailed. The design of extensions and other alterations should:

- normally be smaller than the existing building and should be so arranged not to intrude on the main frontage
- reflect the original character and form of the building

2.2 Generally the Council will seek to ensure that the visual symmetry of semi-detached pairs and the rhythm of spacing between them and the continuity of terraced buildings is retained and where possible enhanced, especially at roof level and on elevations visible from the street.



Above: Semi-detached properties often have a very strong symmetrical relationship which is enhanced by the rhythm of the gaps between them.

2.3 In many cases the character and form of the building and its context will require a traditional design approach. However, modern designs using contemporary and sustainable materials will generally be welcomed as the Council does not wish to restrict creative designs where they can be integrated successfully into their context. Where well designed and finished and in the right location, modern design approaches can serve to improve the sustainability of buildings and significantly improve their appearance to the general benefit of the street scene

2.4 Detached buildings in varied streetscenes have the greatest capacity to accommodate contemporary extensions and alterations. However, where buildings form a clear continuous grouping, greater care will be required to preserve the visual character of the group.

2.5 In some cases, the property may be located within a sensitive area, such as a conservation area, or have a unique set of circumstances which require particular attention (such as being or being close to a listed building or protected tree). Extensions to properties in such circumstances will require more care and thought at the design stage, in accordance with other policies of the LDP.

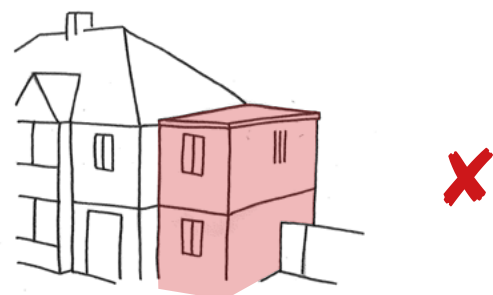
### 3.0 Massing Scale, Design and External Materials

3.1 All extensions and other alterations should be consistent with the design, character and shape of the original house and should normally be subordinate. Roofs should match the main roof in terms of shape and pitch. Flat roofed extensions are not normally acceptable, although they may be considered the most appropriate solution in particular instances. The ridge of the extension roof line should ideally be set below that of the existing roof ridge and certainly must not exceed the roof ridge height of the existing building. New eave heights should either match or be lower than existing eaves, to avoid extensions being greater in storey height than the original building.



Above: Well designed extensions following the form and pitch of the existing roof.

Below: Poor design which has no relationship to existing roof form

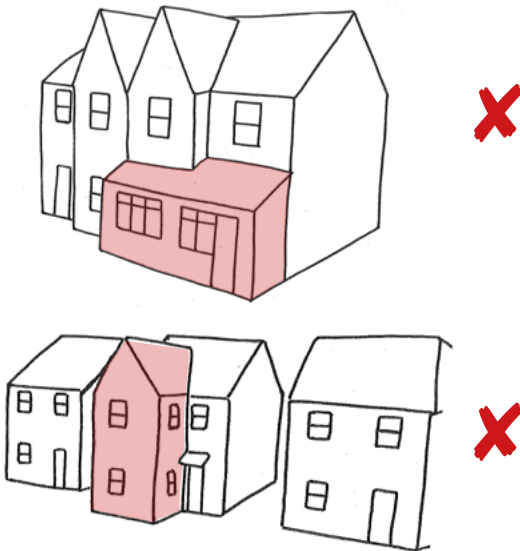




3.2 A flat roof may be appropriate on a modest single storey extension where it is not visible in public views. Side extension roofs should normally be pitched to match the house. Otherwise flat roof extensions will not normally be allowed unless these are contemporary to the existing roofs or part of a high quality, contemporary design.

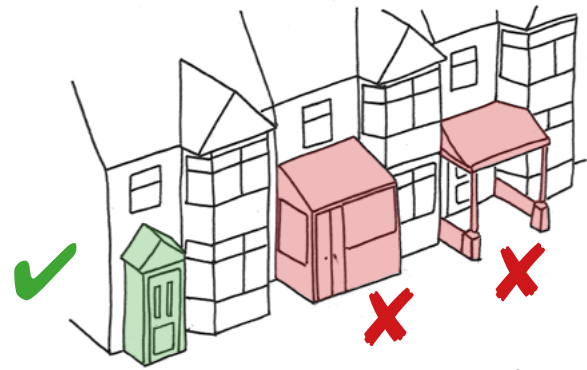
**Front Extensions**

3.3 Other than porches, extensions to the front of houses are not normally acceptable and should generally be avoided since they are highly prominent, often break the building line, compromise the relationship between the house and the street and can compromise the streetscene, particularly where it is part of a row of properties: terraced, semi-detached or detached.



Above: Poorly designed front extensions which do not reflect the character of the street, break the established building line and are out of proportion with the existing building.

3.4 When designing a porch, it is important, like any other extension, that it should reflect the character of the house. The porch should be in proportion to the scale of the house and should avoid being over-dominant. In the case of semi-detached or terraced properties, porches, front extensions or canopies that cover the whole frontage or compromise the symmetry of the existing frontage are unlikely to be acceptable.



Above: The two porches on the right do not reflect the character of the street, break the established building line and are out of proportion with the existing building. The porch on the left respects the building line and its scale and roof form compliment the existing building.

**Side Extensions**

3.5 Depending on the design of the house, there are a number of ways to ensure that side extensions do not dominate the original house and are subservient to it, such as setting it back from the front wall; dropping its roof height below the original; and avoiding the use of strong architectural features that might compete with the original house.

3.6 If poorly designed, side extensions can harm the appearance and rhythm of the street scene by excessive infilling of the spaces and gaps between regularly placed buildings, resulting in a terracing effect. Proposals should not infill these spaces in a disproportionate and unbalanced manner. This is a particular risk where two storey extensions are proposed in the gaps between semi-detached pairs or detached properties.

3.7 Side extensions should be set back from the front wall of the house which will also ensure that it will be subservient in appearance. The height and width of side extensions should be proportionate to the dimensions of the main house with the width being normally significantly less than the original property. Side walls to extensions should normally remain parallel to the original house to ensure the established character of the street and the original house is maintained.



3.8 When adding a two storey extension to the side of an end terraced house, it is sometimes more suitable to continue the terrace building line and roof ridge height. In this way, the extension would appear as if it was originally designed to be part of the terrace, as one coherent building.



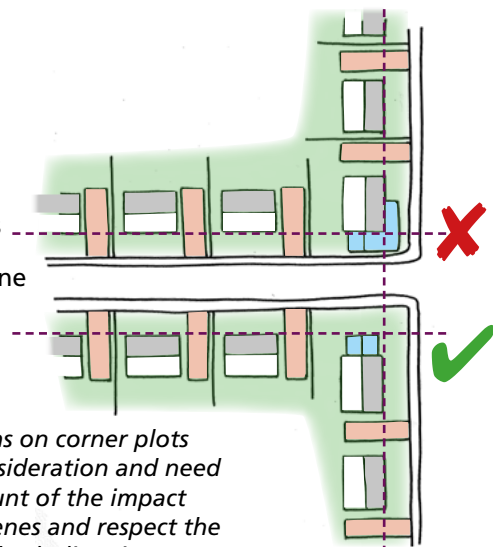
Above: This two storey extension to an end terraced house has been designed to continue the building and roof line of the existing terrace

3.9 It is desirable that the extension / alteration should be capable of being constructed and maintained from within the garden of the applicant's property and should not require access for these purposes to be taken from neighbouring property. The retention of gaps to the side boundary is therefore encouraged.

3.10 The design of extensions on corner plots needs to be carefully considered as they may be visible from more than one street frontage. Particular attention may have to be given to the impact on the building line on both street frontages and the potential for the extension to have an overbearing presence in the streetscene, particularly if it includes blank walls. The latter could be avoided if the proposal includes windows to each street elevation.

**Key:**

-  Gardens
-  Houses
-  Driveways
-  Extensions
-  Building line



Above: Extensions on corner plots need careful consideration and need to take full account of the impact on both streetscenes and respect the building lines in both directions

**Rear Extensions**

3.11 The most common type of house extension is to the rear as it is often the easiest and most obvious way to extend a house and provide additional living space. Extensions should be in proportion with the original building and should avoid blocking natural light to and the outlook from neighbouring properties (please see below for further guidance in this respect).

3.12 Rear extensions, either single or two storey, should not normally exceed 4m in depth where the extension is built on a shared boundary (provided it does not break the 45° rule outlined below). This allows for construction of a reasonable sized extension without unacceptably impacting on the amenity of the neighbouring property. Larger extensions may be acceptable occasionally on substantial detached properties, but only in cases where it can be demonstrated that no harm to neighbouring amenity would result and the extension would not dominate the original house.

3.13 Rear extensions should not normally extend beyond the side walls of the main building.

3.14 Where there is a sharp change in levels between two houses, the house on higher ground will have a greater effect on its neighbour, therefore the height and position of the extension will need careful consideration.



### Extensions and Alterations to Roofs

3.15 All roof extensions have a significant impact on the appearance of a house and the surrounding area. Not all roof spaces are suitable for extension / alterations to provide additional accommodation. To achieve a good design, it is necessary to pay particular attention to the size and form of the existing roof. For example, the scale of extensions required to enlarge a roof with a shallow or limited roof pitch may add significant, visually harmful bulk to the building and wider streetscene. Additional space should not be accommodated by raising the height of the main roof and / or the wallheads unless the proposal makes a positive contribution to an existing varied street scene. Where proposals of this nature would affect a traditional building, particular care is required.

3.16 Roof extensions that alter the basic shape of the roof, for example, from a hip to a gable end on a semi-detached house, will be unacceptable where they would result in an imbalance between the semi-detached pair and create a visually heavy roof on one half. However, where one half of a semi-detached pair of houses has previously been altered and this has created imbalance, a well designed alteration that returns symmetry to the pair may be acceptable. Such cases will always be dependent on the individual design merits of existing alterations.

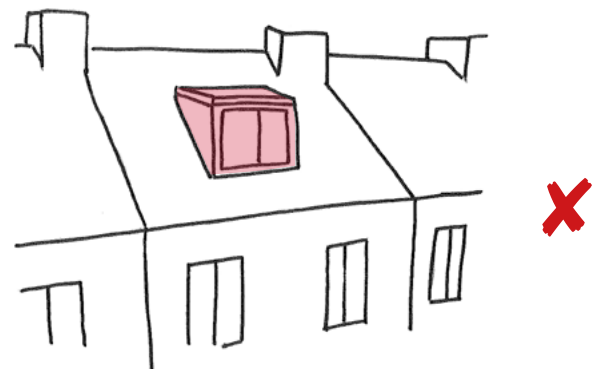


Above: Poorly designed roof extension that unbalances the semi-detached pair

3.17 Dormers are often considered to be a more simple way of providing additional living accommodation with minimal impact on the structure of the house. However, if the dormer is not designed sensitively, it can harm the integrity of the building and the character of the street scene. Dormer extensions should be designed so that their size and design is proportionate with the roof of the existing building.

3.18 Dormers should be as small as possible and should generally be located within the rear slope. The Council will resist dormers within the front roof slope unless they are a dominant or original feature of the streetscene. Normally, the original roof form should remain the dominant feature in the appearance of the building. Box dormers are often inappropriate in appearance and the design should consider a variety of other roof types. The treatment of the cheeks and front elevation of dormers should be in keeping with the character of the existing property.

Below: Example of poorly designed box dormer.



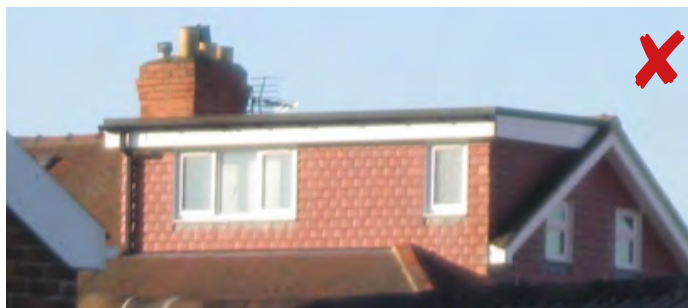
Below: Well designed dormer modestly scaled and within the roof plane





- 3.19 The presence of existing nearby large and unsightly dormers will not be considered as an acceptable reason to build similarly large dormers. Two smaller dormers will in some cases be more acceptable than one large dormer. Where two small dormer windows already exist, it will not be acceptable to fill in the gap and form one large dormer.
- 3.20 Box dormers constructed using the full width (and / or height) of the roof will not be permitted due to their bulky appearance which can unbalance the overall street scene. Dormer windows should be set within the roof and not extend to the extremities i.e. they should be positioned significantly below the ridge line and set back from the front wall of the house (the wallhead) and in from the side elevations. Dormers on side elevations of hipped roofs should be avoided as this has a greater impact on the appearance and can impact more significantly on the privacy of neighbours.

*Below: Poorly designed dormers appear excessively large and bulky in the roof*



- 3.21 In many cases roof lights may be more appropriate, since they have a less intrusive effect upon the roof plane and can also reduce the problems of overlooking. They do not normally require planning permission, although this should always be checked.

### Garages and Other Outbuildings

- 3.22 The location and design of new garages and outbuildings, whether freestanding or attached, should respect the character and appearance of the property, the relationship with neighbouring houses and the overall street scene. The size and position of such new buildings should be smaller in scale and subservient to the main house and should not generally be positioned in front of the main house unless this forms part of the character of the streetscene.
- 3.23 Similar to other extensions and alterations, these buildings should not adversely affect those in neighbouring houses enjoying their house or garden and therefore should not cause overlooking, overshadowing or be overbearing.
- 3.24 In the case of new garages, a sufficient driveway should be provided to allow vehicles to stand clear of the public road with the doors open. This requires a minimum distance of 6m. For garages on rear access lanes, the garage must be set back sufficiently so that when its doors are open, they do not project into the lane.

### Materials

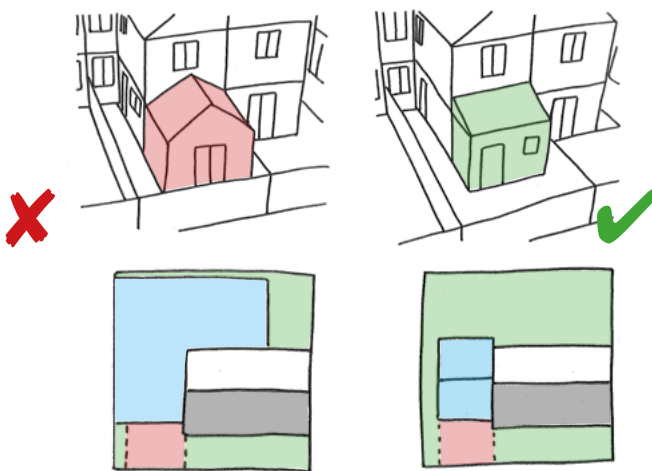
- 3.25 As a general rule, external materials, including roofing materials, that match and harmonise with the existing property and the surrounding area should be used. This is particularly important for front and side extensions as these are normally more visible from the street. In most instances, this means matching the materials to those already used on the original house. Materials are also important in conservatories where the base and "fire" walls should be finished to match the wall of the property.
- 3.26 Although it may not always be possible to find exact matching materials and features (such as cills and ridge tiles), particularly for older houses, proposals will be expected to use materials that complement the colours, tones and textures of the house. The use of second-hand materials is encouraged to help find an acceptable match, provided they are in sound condition and fit for purpose.





## 4.0 Overdevelopment of the Plot

- 4.1 There is a limit to the number of extensions that can be added to a house. What constitutes overdevelopment will vary from site to site, as each set of circumstances is different and unique. Gardens can improve quality of life for residents, provide wildlife habitats, and give a home space for sun and daylight to enter. The Council consider it important for a home to provide appropriate garden space, not just for the current residents but also for future residents. Furthermore, in some locations, large gardens are part of the character of the area.
- 4.2 House extensions may mean reducing the size of garden areas. Any residential extension or alteration should not result in the unacceptable loss of external amenity space. Cumulative loss of amenity space through multiple applications will not be acceptable. Any extension or alteration must not compromise the quality and usability of any remaining amenity space.



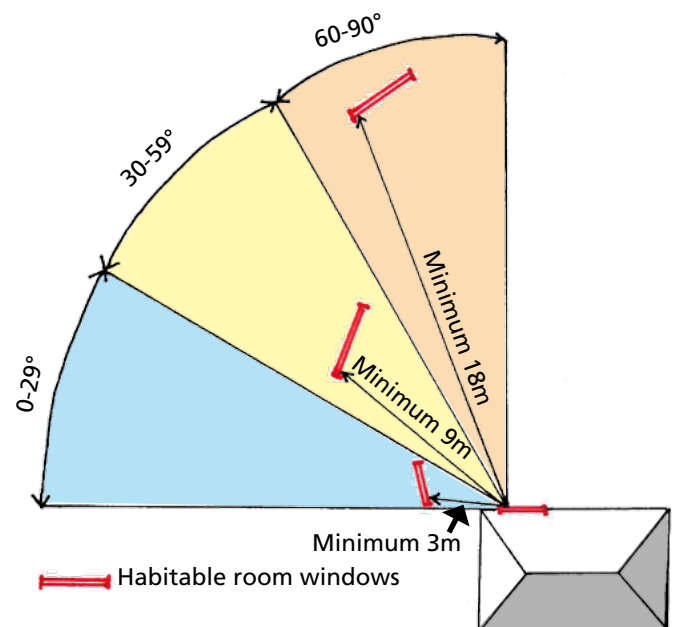
Above: The drawings on the left show extensions that are of a scale that unacceptably cover the majority of the existing garden area whilst those on the right indicate extensions that provide additional accommodation whilst still retaining an acceptable level of amenity space (please see key on page 6)

## 5.0 Privacy and Amenity

- 5.1 Extensions and alterations should avoid causing a significant loss of privacy, overshadowing or quality of life (usually called 'residential amenity') to neighbouring residents, either to their house or by directly overlooking their gardens. This is an important consideration for the Council when determining planning applications for householder developments.

### Extensions - Separation Distances

- 5.2 The following minimum distances should be maintained between habitable windows and dwellings in separate occupation (as shown in the diagram below):
- 18 metres apart if the angles between the nearest edges of the windows are in the range of 60-90 degrees;
  - 9 metres apart in the range 30-59 degrees; and
  - 3 metres apart in the range of 0-29 degrees.



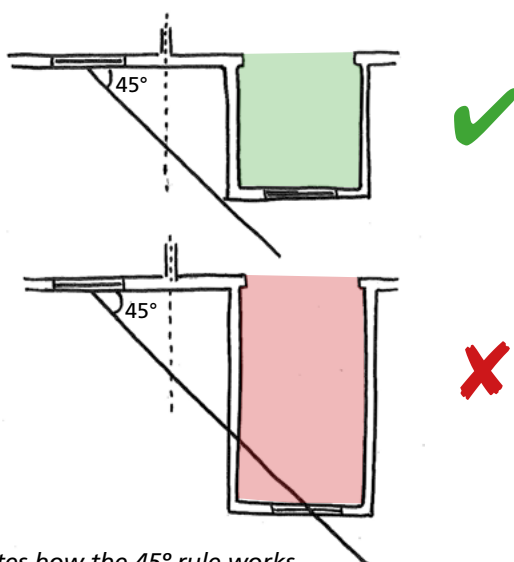
- 5.3 The separation distance required to safeguard residential amenity is particularly relevant for extensions introducing accommodation at first floor level and above. The gap may need to be increased if there are significant differences in ground level which would result in serious overlooking of neighbouring properties.



### Extensions - Overshadowing

5.4 It is important that an extension does not reduce sunlight and daylight to an unacceptable level in neighbouring houses. It is also important not to cast large shadows over neighbouring houses or gardens. The degree of sunlight and daylight lost as a result of an extension will depend on the position of the development relative to the sun and its height and length in relation to neighbouring properties. It will be expected that the greater part of any overshadowing caused by new development should be confined to the applicant's own land.

5.5 In order to assess the acceptability of proposals in terms of the degree of sunlight and daylight lost and shadow cast the '45 degree test' is used. This rule is used to assess the impact on amenity of neighbours. An extension should not exceed a line taken at 45° from the centre point of an adjoining neighbour's nearest habitable room window. If the proposed extension breaches the 45° line, then it could potentially result in a loss of daylight/sunlight to the neighbouring house.



Above: Illustrates how the 45° rule works

5.6 Where the natural light of an existing building is already poor, proposals for extensions and outbuildings will need to consider carefully how to avoid further reduction and special care also needs to be

taken where an extension already exists on the other side of the window to avoid a "tunnel effect".

### Conservatories

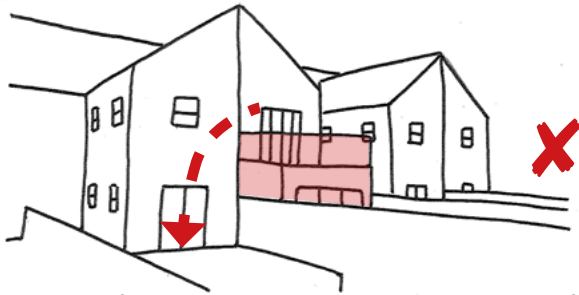
5.7 Planning permission will not normally be granted for a conservatory on a principal, or other conspicuous, elevation. Exceptions may be justified for appropriately designed conservatories where this is part of a traditional character of the area.

5.8 Conservatories will be assessed using the 45° rule outlined above. They also have the potential for significant impact on amenity due to the large areas of glazing leading to overlooking of neighbouring properties and light pollution.

5.9 Conservatories should not cause overlooking on a neighbour's useable garden. If no permanent screening exists and where the boundary treatment is less than 2m high, it may be necessary to construct a solid elevation, include fixed obscure glazing or provide screening of the garden boundary for privacy and to prevent overlooking. On a sloping site, careful consideration should be given to the relationship between site levels and boundary treatments to ensure overlooking is not created.

### Balconies and Roof Terraces

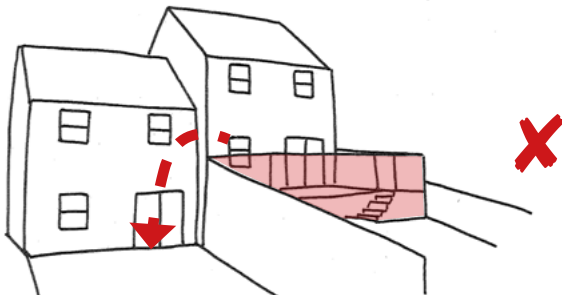
5.10 Balconies and roof terraces, where appropriate, can provide valuable and welcome amenity space for properties. However, in many cases, they can significantly affect neighbour's privacy, particularly if they are located where it is possible to look into gardens or windows that were previously largely private. The presence of balconies and roof terraces may also result in noise disturbance, particularly to nearby bedroom windows, and can be harmful to the appearance of a building. Careful consideration is therefore required for the location and design of any rooftop terrace or balcony. The use of screening as a means of mitigating overlooking issues is unlikely to be acceptable as it would result in increased visual bulk and prominence.



Above: Balconies often lead to unacceptable overlooking of neighbouring properties and their gardens

### Patios and Decking

5.11 Patios or areas of decking (where they require planning permission), can impact on the amenity of neighbours and if located too close to the boundary, they may also result in overlooking. If a patio or decking area is elevated, there will be a need for safety fencing around it which may also increase the overbearing impact on neighbours and in some cases cause overshadowing.



Above: Raised decking and patio areas can also lead to unacceptable overlooking of neighbouring properties and their gardens

## 6.0 Road Safety

- 6.1 The construction of extensions should not restrict or affect any existing access, turning area or parking space to the detriment of road safety. In-curtilage parking provision should be maintained or appropriately increased in accordance with Council approved standards.
- 6.2 Dropped kerbs to provide vehicular access onto a property will generally be granted in incidences where there is adequate visibility and they would not result in a significant hazard to users of the public road. However, where new entrances are

proposed along a boundary, these should retain as much original walling, fencing, hedging or railings as practical to ensure the appearance of enclosure is preserved.

- 6.3 The construction of large open hard surfaced areas can have a harmful effect on the setting to a house and the street scene. Where a hardstanding for car parking is proposed, sufficient space for soft landscaping should be incorporated where possible to screen cars and minimise the visual impact of the hard surfaced area. Planting can enhance residential areas and can have excellent screening value. In addition, areas of planting can be used to receive surface water run-off. Permeable or porous materials such as gravel (where this will not wash onto the public road) and permeable paving should be used to reduce surface water run-off and possible risk of flooding.

## 7.0 Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings

- 7.1 Separate guidance, such as conservation area appraisals, may already be available for conservation areas and historic buildings and applications should demonstrate that they have been considered in the proposals for alterations or extensions. For further information, please see the Historic Built Environment Supplementary Guidance or submit a pre-application enquiry.
- 7.2 Applications to alter or extend buildings within conservation areas or which are Listed Buildings, should take full account of the general principles laid out above. They must also be very carefully designed to ensure that they retain historic detail and use materials which are appropriate to the age and historic or architectural interest of the building. It is the details and the materials which are responsible for the character and appearance of individual buildings and the wider locality.

7.3 Proposals affecting historic buildings or buildings in historic areas will be assessed on a case by case basis, considering their impact on the building's architectural or historic significance. The architectural and historic interest includes original building fabric, such as windows and doors, and other details which were designed in materials appropriate to the age and significance of the building. It will also include the contribution to the character of the wider area. The presence of existing unsympathetic extensions or alterations to the original or adjacent buildings will not be considered to set a precedent for future extensions and reversal of unsympathetic

alterations as part of a proposal will be considered favourably.

7.4 Exceptional modern design and material finishes may be considered favourably in cases, where it can be demonstrated that the scale and design quality of an extension would preserve or enhance the special interest of the original building or the character of the area. For example, linking a modern extension using glazing or a structure with lightweight appearance may be appropriate, particularly where this would enable the original building form to be more clearly distinguished.

## Glossary

**Amenity** - something that adds to a person's comfort or convenience; eg. privacy; lack of noise; attractive views

**Architectural Features** - the designed detail on a building or structure, eg. decorative lintels, sill and eaves details.

**Building Line** - a line drawn parallel to any front boundary along the front face of a building

**Character** - the combination of features and structures that distinguish one place/ structure from another providing a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements to give a place identity

**Habitable Rooms** - All rooms other than halls, landings, kitchens (unless incorporated into living/dining spaces), bathrooms, toilets and small utility rooms.

**Massing** - the combined effect of the arrangement, shape and volume of buildings

**Original Useable Private Garden** - the private space available to a dwelling before the erection of any extensions or garages, etc.

**Principal / Main Frontage** - The main front wall of the house, normally fronting onto a road and including the main public access to the property

**Scale** - the relationship of one thing to its neighbour and its local context. Scale relates to proportions of buildings in a local context and how the observer sees them.

**Streetscene** - the roadways, pavements, street furniture, trees, signage, building elevations and other elements that comprise the street environment

**Townscape** - the combination of buildings and the spaces between them and how they relate to one another to form the familiar and cherished local places within the town and its wider context.

**Useable Private Garden** - the private space available to a dwelling, including decking, that can be used for the enjoyment of residents of the house that has been adequately screened, usually to the rear and side of the property, but excludes the driveway, garage and any parking space.

**Wallhead** - Straight top of a wall