



Harlow District Council

# Harlow Common Guidelines

## Supplementary Planning Document

Adopted  
March 2007

Harlow Council  
Planning Services  
Civic Centre  
The Water Gardens  
Harlow Essex  
CM20 1WG





# HARLOW DISTRICT COUNCIL

## COMMON GUIDELINES FOR THE ALTERATION AND EXTENSION OF DOMESTIC PROPERTY

UNDER  
PLANNING, COVENANT, AND DEVELOPMENT  
CONTROL

## SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

**March 2007**



## **1. OBJECTIVE**

- 1.1 The objective of these guidelines is to provide applicants, members and officers with advice in relation to the assessment of proposed domestic property extensions and alterations to ensure that they:
- strengthen, enhance, protect and create local character;
  - relate to their setting; and,
  - where possible, are sustainable.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Harlow District Council's Development Control and Covenant Control sections have operated a system of Common Guidelines since January 1993 to householders who wish to extend their property or construct outbuildings within five metres of the rear of the dwelling. Proposals that comply with these guidelines are likely to receive favourable consideration under both covenants and development control.
- 2.2 Council officers will use these guidelines in determining whether your application meets Council policies outlined in the Adopted Replacement Harlow Local Plan July 2006.
- 2.3 For the purpose of this Supplementary Planning Document, extensions include conservatories, garages, loft conversions and porches. Further guidance for extensions can also be found in The Essex Design Guide.

## **3. COVENANTS**

- 3.1 Most homes in the former Harlow New Town have covenants contained in their transfer documents. This means that approval will be required to release the covenants for various works and activities, including the installation of windows of altered proportions, the installation of a dish antennae, the conversion of a garage, removal/alteration of lawn areas, trees and shrubs affected by covenants and running a business from home.

## **4. THE PROCESS**

- 4.1 The Council has a statutory period of eight weeks to process an application for planning permission. As part of this process, the Council will formally notify immediate neighbours and other neighbours considered affected by the proposal, as well as various technical experts. You are therefore encouraged to consult with your neighbours regarding your proposal, as any objections from your neighbours must be considered by Council.
- 4.2 If the application falls within a conservation area or is of local public interest, a site notice of the application will be erected. Please note that a site visit to your property is an essential part of the process. This enables our officers to consider the proposal in light of distances from neighbours, assess impact, and to view the local street scene.

## **5. GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

- 5.1 Proposals to extend and alter properties will be expected to comply with Policy BE1 of the Replacement Harlow Local Plan July 2006. The policy requires that all new and extended buildings should relate to their setting to strengthen, enhance or protect local character. In general, your proposal should take into account the following:
- Design should be well integrated with the existing dwelling and, where achievable, be energy efficient.
  - Extensions should be constructed with materials similar to the existing dwelling and, where possible, incorporate energy efficiency.
  - There should be no material overlooking or overshadowing of adjoining properties and the effect on visual amenity for neighbours should be minimised.
- 5.2 Please note that there may be other policies within the Plan which may be relevant to your proposal, for example, if your proposal occurs in a Conservation Area or in or near a Green Wedge.
- 5.3 Proposals adjacent to or near a watercourse should retain a distance of at least 8 meters as a buffer zone. A Flood Risk Assessment should accompany any application for a proposal within a designated flood zone. Designated flood zones are normally located along or near watercourses, and the Council's Planning Department can help to determine whether a property is within this zone.

## **6. PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT**

- 6.1 There are some forms of small extension that are 'Permitted Development' and do not need planning permission. If you require any guidance in respect of what may or may not be permitted development you should contact Planning Services on 01279 446598. Even if you do not need to make a planning application, you should follow good design principles. A separate application for Covenant Consent may also be required.

## **7. SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES**

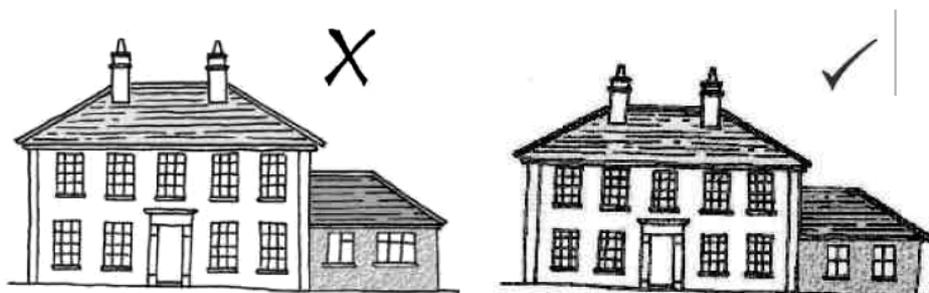
- 7.1 Energy efficient design is promoted where it does not impact upon other Guideline requirements. This may include the provision of south facing windows to maximise natural day light and warmth, minimising north facing windows to reduce heat loss, cross ventilation to assist in naturally cooling the dwelling in warm weather, efficient insulation for all weather, velux or skylight windows to maximise access to natural light, on-site drainage and the provision of direct pedestrian access to gardens from living areas.
- 7.2 Building materials that are sympathetic but do not match the existing dwelling/area may be considered where they are more energy efficient than the original dwelling materials.
- 7.3 The retention of landscape, landform, mature trees and shrubs will be considered as part of the assessment of extensions/alterations, and where appropriate, may result in a tree preservation order or other conditions.

## 8. PASSIVE SURVEILLANCE

- 8.1 Where a proposed extension is consistent with other aspects of these guidelines and abuts a public space, such as a road or park, the extension should incorporate windows addressing the public space to afford opportunities for passive surveillance, and thus contribute to a safer environment.

## 9. DESIGN AND APPEARANCE

- 9.1 The size, scale, form, detailing and the materials of your extension will contribute to its overall appearance. For example, window and door openings should be of similar proportion to those existing in the existing dwelling (refer to diagram below).



*These windows are not sympathetic*

*Windows different but sympathetic*

## 10. REAR EXTENSIONS

- 10.1 Rear extensions generally have less impact on the character and appearance of the street scene. An exception to this might be if the house is on a corner and the back of the house can be seen from a public place. However, scale and form still needs careful consideration because rear extensions are most likely to affect neighbouring properties, particularly if they are two storey. It is necessary to ensure that rear extensions do not have an excessive adverse effect upon adjacent properties in terms of privacy, overshadowing, loss of daylight and sunlight, overlooking, visual impact or being overbearing, and loss of visual amenity.

### **Single storey rear extension for terraced and semi-detached properties**

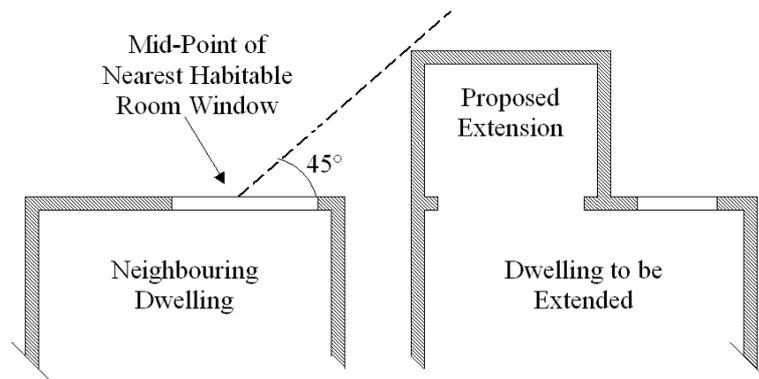
- 10.2 Extensions should not exceed an overall depth of 3.65 metres (12 feet) and should ensure that there is no adverse effect on adjacent residents by way of overlooking or overshadowing. Roof types should be determined by the form of the main roof of the original dwelling. Extensions to mid-terraced dwellings should have a flat or slack lean-to roof to avoid detrimental effects on neighbouring properties.

### Single storey rear extension for detached properties

- 10.3 Extensions should not exceed a depth of 4 metres but may be acceptable subject to the general design principles and there being no detrimental effect in terms of overshadowing or overlooking on nearby properties.

### Two storey rear extension for terraced and semi-detached properties

- 10.4 Applications for such extensions to flat backed rear elevations will normally be refused as such applications are likely to result in material overshadowing. However, subject to aspect, proposals may be acceptable if the adjoining neighbour has a similar extension or if the rear elevations of the dwellings have different projecting elevations. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, side windows will be discouraged.
- 10.5 The roof should be sympathetic to the roof of the existing dwelling to aid integration. Essentially this means that the roof should resemble the existing roof and should be at a lower level than the pitch level of the existing roof (refer diagrams on next page).
- 10.6 In all cases, the 45 degree code will be applied to avoid the overshadowing effect. This is represented by a 45 degree line drawn from the midpoint window of the nearest neighbouring habitable room on the second level which then determines the overall depth of the extension (refer to diagram below). Consideration will also be given to comments received from neighbouring residents.

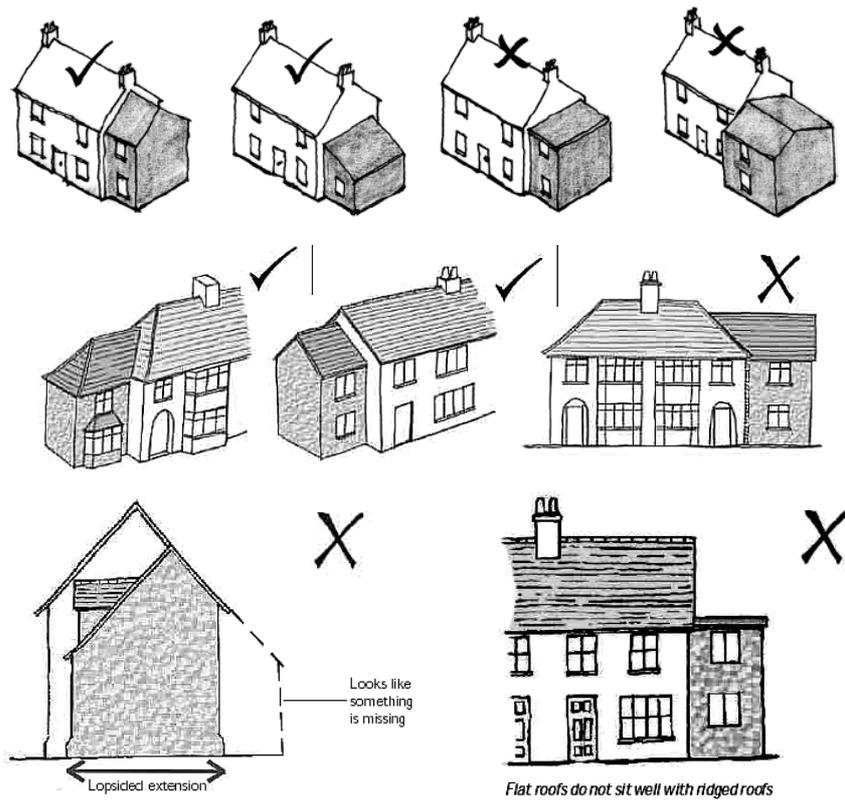


### Two storey rear extension for detached dwellings

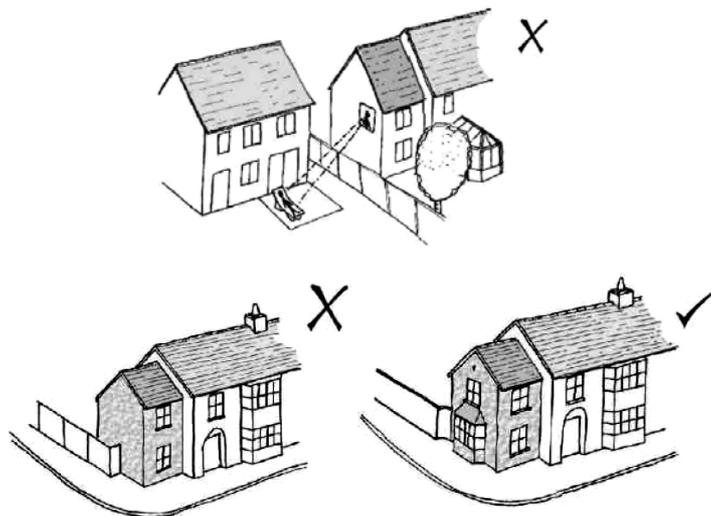
- 10.7 Applications will be considered on their merits subject to the general design principles and provided there are no detrimental effects in terms of overshadowing or overlooking on nearby properties. The 45 degree code should be applied at the second level and consideration will be given to comments received from neighbouring residents. As with two storey extensions on terraced and semi-detached properties the roof design should reflect that of the main dwelling.

## 11. SIDE EXTENSIONS

- 11.1 Designs should incorporate the general design principals. Extensions should be of a width no greater than two-thirds of the width of the existing dwelling and must be integrated by use of similar or matching materials (refer to diagram on next page). The roof should match that of the existing dwelling (refer to diagram on next page).



- 11.2 Designs should aim for a subservient or seamless (flush with front elevation) extension. In conservation areas, extensions should be set back by at least one metre from the front elevation so that it does not detract from the façade of the dwelling. The same applies, where a garage is being incorporated into the extension.
- 11.3 Unless there are exceptional circumstances side windows will be discouraged to avoid overlooking into the adjoining property (refer to diagram below). However, extra daylight can be achieved via velux windows in the roof. An example of an exceptional circumstance would be where side elevations face the street, then side windows might be allowed.



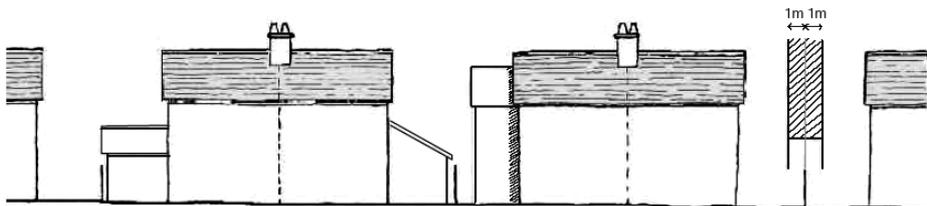
- 11.4 All applications will be determined on their merits. Applications may be refused where the extension would produce insufficient off-street car parking provision in an area with poor off-peak public transport provision.
- 11.5 Please note, that planning permission may also be required to convert an existing garage into a habitable room, where the property is located in Church Langley, within a Conservation Area or is a listed building.

**Side extensions on end of terrace properties**

- 11.6 For even row terraces, the existing front elevation line should be continued to provide continuity and symmetry. For staggered terraces, a subordinate approach is best so that the extension is not overbearing.

**Side extensions on semi-detached and detached properties**

- 11.7 The extension shall be set in at least one metre from the side boundary or fenceline to maintain their open design and to avoid the terracing effect (refer to diagram below). This also creates a break in the roofline. A break between properties also allows for reasonable space for external access to the rear of properties and for periodic maintenance of side elevations such as the roof and gutter without needing to gain access via the neighbouring property. Rooflines should be subordinate to that of the main building.



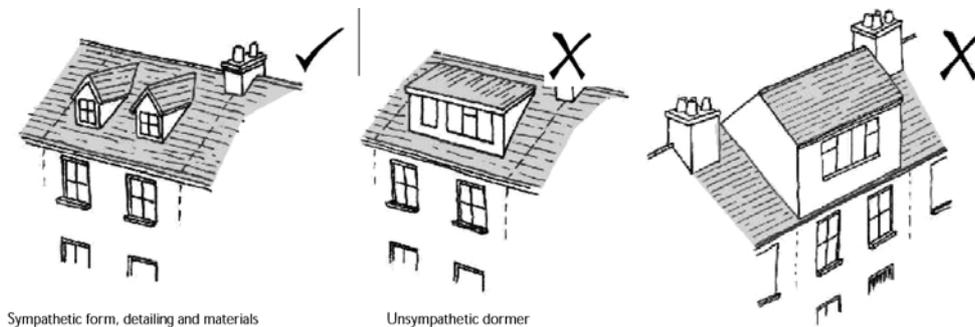
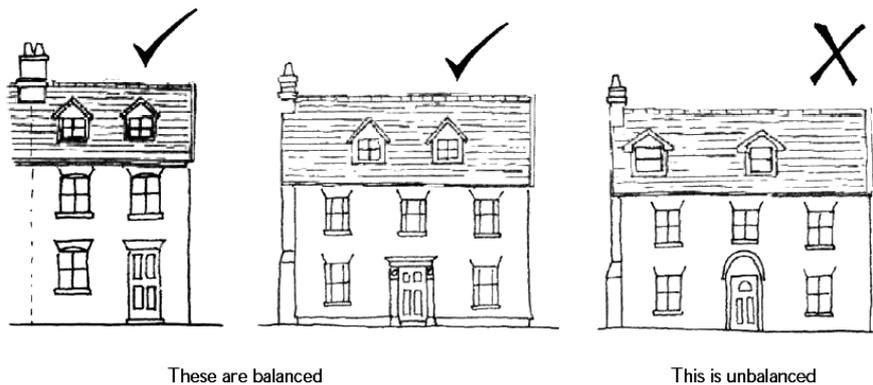
- 11.8 Extensions to detached properties need to be in keeping with the street character, and the architectural design of the house.

**12. FRONT EXTENSIONS**

- 12.1 Front extensions, for example, porches, can be visually intrusive in the street scene and should therefore be of moderate proportions. A porch or front extension will project a maximum of 1.5 metres towards highway boundaries. Any exception to this guideline will be where there is a staggered housing layout so that the porch or front extension may be a seamless addition in the street scene or where the porch or front extension mirrors an existing extension of an adjoining neighbour.
- 12.2 The character of existing porch designs in the locality should be replicated and the roof should be sympathetic to the existing dwelling. The extension should also be integrated by use of matching or similar material (either the same or sympathetic).
- 12.3 The 45 degree code should be applied to protect light to habitable rooms and kitchens of neighbouring properties.

## 13. LOFT CONVERSIONS, DORMER WINDOWS, AND ROOF FORMS

- 13.1 Dormers are sometimes acceptable at the rear, but not normally at the front of a dwelling and must maintain the existing roof shape i.e. gable or hipped/half-hipped etc. Dormers should be set within the existing roof slope a minimum of 1.0 metre above eaves level, 0.5 below the existing roof ridge, and set 1.0 metre in from either side boundary of the property. Where more than one dormer is proposed, the total width of dormers on a roof should not exceed half the width of the existing roof (measured at its mid-height). Windows should be balanced across the roof well below the ridge level (refer to diagrams below).



- 13.2 No alteration to a roof will be allowed to alter the existing ridge unless the property can be viewed in isolation.

## 14. GARDEN STRUCTURES

### Sheds

- 14.1 In most cases, garden sheds below 10 m<sup>2</sup> (100 sq.ft.) do not require planning permission provided the entire structure does not exceed 4 metres in height if it has a shallow pitched roof or 3 metres in height if it has a flat roof.

## **Outbuildings and garages**

- 14.2 In general, outbuildings such as workshops, games rooms, sun lounges should not exceed the size of a double garage: 26 m<sup>2</sup> (288 sq.ft) and should have a low pitched roof, but not necessarily flat so that it blends in with the surrounding environment and is less obtrusive. Such structures should be positioned in gardens so as to cause as little visual intrusion to neighbours as possible.
- 14.3 Applicants should also consider the Vehicle Parking Standards specified by the Essex County Council. The standards state that the minimum garage size for one car is 5 metres by 2.5 metres.

## **15. APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES**

- 15.1 Applications received from people with disabilities indicating a departure from the above general guidelines will receive most careful consideration with every attempt being made to satisfy the applicant's requirements where these requirements are related to disability. All such applications will be dealt with as a priority.

## **16. DEFINITIONS**

- 16.1 **Original Dwelling:** This means the dwelling as it was first built, or as it was on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1948. Although you may not have built an extension to the dwelling, a previous owner may have done so. Therefore, any extension proposal must also be considered in light of any previous extensions to the dwelling.
- 16.2 **Character of an Area:** This is the qualities that affect our experience of a place. In combination, buildings and their component elements (forms, detailing, materials etc.) can create strong character through uniformity or variety. The influence of the character of the surrounding area on the consideration of extension proposals at a property is limited to that part of the street or neighbourhood visible from the site, i.e. the immediate vicinity.

## **17. FURTHER INFORMATION**

- 17.1 For additional information and advice on the feasibility of specific proposals or general enquiries, please contact the following:
- Covenant Control/Building Regulations: 01279 446 859.
  - Development Control: 01279 446 598.

