

Extensions and Roof Additions





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This guide is one of a series of leaflets that will provide information and advice on the services offered by the Directorate of Development and Renewal. In addition the Directorate offers a wide range of other services from Building Control, Access to Employment, Inward Investment and Major Projects including Transport Infrastructure. Housing services are also now part of Development and Renewal. For an introduction to these services please access the Council's website (address on back of leaflet). This guide covers the following:

1. Why are controls needed?
2. General principles for building extensions.
 - a. Rear extension.
 - b. Side extension.
 - c. Roof addition.
 - d. Roof lights.
3. What if my property is within a Conservation Area?
4. Further information.

This guide provides advice for residents of the Borough who may be considering the alteration or extension of their residential property. It is intended to provide general information and guidance only, and does not represent the Council's detailed planning policies. These are contained within the Council's Development Plan where policies provide further detailed guidance upon which applications for planning permission will be considered.

Tower Hamlets has a wide range of property types and this guide cannot deal with every one, but seeks to identify the main principals that make for a well designed extension. In all cases, advice may be obtained by contacting the Directorate of Development & Renewal and details are found at the end of this leaflet.



1. Why Are Controls Needed?

Residential buildings make up a substantial part of the built environment in the Borough. As such, the way in which buildings are extended or altered has a significant effect on its character and heritage. The purpose of Council policies is to seek to control development in order that this character may be protected and the amenities of individual property owners safeguarded. However, not all alterations or extensions to residential properties require the Council's permission. Some alterations and extensions may be carried out as 'permitted development'. You are advised to speak to the Council for further information.

2. General Principles for Building Extensions

The general principle when considering an extension to the building is that it should in all cases be subordinate to the original property in terms of its design and scale. A well designed extension harmonises with the original appearance of a building and is constructed in materials to match in order to minimise its impact on the streetscape. A well designed extension should ensure that it does not result in overlooking, loss of privacy or light to its neighbours and does not encroach upon valuable amenity garden space.



2a. Rear Extensions

Extensions to the rear of residential properties, particularly terrace houses, should normally be single storey, as two storey rear extensions can lead to a loss of privacy or significant overshadowing of neighbours and result in a loss of outlook and light. For these reasons, two storey rear extensions that take up the full width of a residential property will not normally be permitted. Single or two storey extensions with flat roofs will also not normally be permitted as their design can create overlooking, for example if it is intended that the roof be used as a terrace.

2b. Side Extensions

Extensions to the side of properties should respect the form and shape of the original building. Oversized extensions dominate and detract from the architecture of the original building and for this reason extensions should be set back from the front elevation to ensure that it is seen as a secondary subordinate feature to it. This applies to both single and two storey extensions unless there are specific reasons for taking a different approach, for example, when extending a terrace to provide an additional dwelling.

When considering the design of a two storey extension to the side of a property, it is particularly important that the roof design matches that of the original house. A full pitched roof to the front will normally be considered inappropriate in favour of a pitched roof which is slightly lower than that of the original building to ensure that it appears a subordinate feature to it.



2c. Roof Additions

Roof extensions can have a significant impact on the character and appearance of a property and the area in which it is located. For this reason, the Council will expect any roof extension to be subordinate to the main property.

The Council will encourage the construction of dormer-window extensions that are set into the rear roof slope to ensure that the overall character of the roofscape is maintained. Box type roof extensions that project from the back elevation to ridge height will normally be considered to be visually obtrusive and will be resisted by the Council.



Normally, the Council will not permit dormer or roof extensions on the front elevations of buildings and will seek to limit these to the rear only. Exception to this approach may be where there is a historic reason for providing a dormer roof extension to the front, for example when there are existing roof additions on either side of a terrace property, but this will need to be carefully considered and justified taking into account the Council's wider policy objectives.

Roof extensions that seek to exceed the ridge height of an existing roof slope will also be resisted by the Council on the grounds that this form of development would be likely to detract from the character and appearance of an area and would fail to act as a subordinate feature in the streetscape.

2d. Roof Lights

Roof lights or windows are fitted within an existing roof slope and can provide sufficient natural light and ventilation to make a roof area habitable. In sensitive locations and where of an appropriate scale and design the Council will favour the installation of roof lights in preference to rear roof or dormer extensions. Within a Conservation Area a roof light set flush with the plane of the roof would be expected.

3. What if my Property is within a Conservation Area?

Conservation Areas are designated by the Council to protect areas that have a special architectural or historic character. Within these locations, the Council will seek to adopt a more restrictive approach to residential extensions to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The Council's approach to Conservation Areas is further explained in a separate information guide, available from the Directorate of Development & Renewal.



For translation phone: 



Albanian	Për përkthim, telefono:	Lithuanian	Vertimui, skambinkite:
Amharic	አዲስ አበባ፣ተጀግናለሁ በተያያዥ የስራ ሁኔታ ፈቃድ	Malayalam	പാലിഭാഷക്കായി വിളിക്കുക
Arabic	الترجمة ، اتصل:	Polish	Po tłumaczenie, zadzwoń pod:
Bengali/ Sylheti	অনুবাদের জন্য টেলিফোন করুন :	Portuguese	Para tradução, telefone:
Chinese	如欲索取翻譯，請致電：	Punjabi	ਤਰਜਮੇ ਲਈ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ:
Croatian/ Serbian	Za prijevod, nazovite:	Russian	Для перевода, позвоните под номер:
Czech	Pro překlad volejte:	Somali	Wixii turjumid ah, wac:
Farsi	برای ترجمه با تلفن زیر تماس بگیرید:	Spanish	Para traducción, telefóne:
French	Pour obtenir une traduction, veuillez appeler :	Swahili	Piga namba hii ili upate makaratas yaliyotafsiriwa:
Greek	Για μετάφραση, τηλεφωνήστε	Turkish	Tercüme İçin, Telefon
Gujarati	તરજૂમા માટે ફોન કરો:	Twi	Se won te brofo na wo pe mboa, fre me
Hindi	अनुवाद के लिए फोन करें:	Urdu	ترجمہ کیلئے فون کریں:
Japanese	翻訳に関する電話は :	Vietnamese	Muốn bản phiên dịch, gọi số:
Kurdish	تەلەيفون بۆ تە رجومە :	Yoruba	Fun itumo ede, ẹ pewa si ero-ibanisoro yi:

020 7364 5009

Also for large print, audio or braille

4. Further Information

The Council encourages and welcomes discussions with all members of the community and business and can provide further detailed guidance by contacting 020 7364 5009.

Alternatively you may wish to visit the Council's website www.towerhamlets.gov.uk for further information.

