

House Extensions Design Guide

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 An important aim of the Council, in fulfilling its role as local planning authority, is to maintain the character and environmental quality of existing residential areas.
- 1.2 Many people wish to add extensions to their homes. A well-designed extension can enhance the appearance and value of a house. On the other hand, an unsympathetic extension can detract from the house itself, create problems for neighbouring residents, and affect the general appearance of the whole area.
- 1.3 The purpose of this Design Guide is to offer advice on the design of house extensions. Every planning application has to be judged on its own merits in relation to the individual circumstances, but the Guide sets out the broad principles and policies which the Council will consider when arriving at a decision.
- 1.4 Not all extensions require planning permission. The law changes from time to time, and if you are not sure whether your proposal needs permission please enquire with the Council. Nevertheless, the Design Guide may be of help whether or not planning permission is required. Remember that you will nearly always need to obtain approval under the Building Regulations. For advice on this matter please contact the Council's Building Control Service.
- 1.5 The Design Guide deals with the most common means of extending a house: single or two storey additions, roof conversions, porches and attached garages. Larger additions (for example "granny annexes") can raise particular design or other planning problems, and so should be the subject of advice from the Council's Planning Service.
- 1.6 It should also be remembered that if your house is a listed building or if it is unlisted but located in a Conservation Area, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or the Oxford Green Belt, special considerations will apply and you should seek advice from the Council's Planning Service.
- 1.7 The following guidance, which was published in draft form for consultation in November 2002, June 2004 and revised in March 2006, offers general advice for the most common circumstances. It is not intended to be unnecessarily restrictive and is not intended to discourage innovative modern designs. However, successful solutions of this kind will usually require the involvement of a professional architect.

2.0 General Points to Bear in Mind

- 2.1 Large extensions at the front of a house are rarely acceptable due to their impact on the street scene. Small porches may be acceptable – check whether planning permission is needed.
- 2.2 Side and rear extensions can cause particular problems in relation to neighbouring properties. Overlooking, overshadowing or overdominance problems can arise, especially with semi-detached or terraced properties, where space is more limited. The reason for the size limitations specified in this Guide is to ensure that any potential harm to neighbouring properties is minimised.
- 2.3 Planning permissions for single-storey flat-roofed extensions may include conditions to prevent the roof being used as a balcony to ensure neighbouring properties are not overlooked.
- 2.4 Reference in this Guide to “habitable rooms” means living-rooms, dining-rooms, bedrooms, studies, and kitchens.
- 2.5 With two-storey extensions, a space of at least 1 metre should normally be left alongside the property’s boundary.
- 2.6 An extension should be compatible with the shape, scale and proportions of the existing house. Extend your home in a way that will be sympathetic with the character of the property and others nearby.
- 2.7 The choice of detailing (shape and type of windows, materials, eaves, etc) should be influenced by that of the existing house. It is important that the roof pitch should match, so that the extension looks like part of the existing house.
- 2.8 In choosing materials try to match or complement the original in colour, tone, size and texture, whether the original material is brick, stone or render. When matching roofing materials, always match the details of the original roof construction as well. Avoid materials which are unsympathetic to the existing house or its neighbours (e.g. stone cladding).
- 2.9 Respect the scale and character of the existing house. In nearly all cases it is better for an extension to appear subordinate to the existing house. The exception to this requirement is when the whole house or bungalow is proposed to be modified or remodelled in a way which is sympathetic to the street-scene.
- 2.10 Retain features of interest such as chimney stacks, garden walls, railings, etc.
- 2.11 Retain sufficient garden space to provide drying, storage and usable amenity areas.

- 2.12 Do not fell trees without first checking whether they are protected and whether separate consent is required for their removal. Seek advice before building close to trees, especially if they are not yet mature.
- 2.13 In coming to its decision on a planning application, the Council will need to take into consideration the relevant policies in the Local Plan, particularly policies H24, DC1, DC5, DC9, GS3, HE1 and HE5.

3.0 Extending a Detached House

- 3.1 The acceptability of **front extensions** will depend largely on their size and impact on the street-scene. Good design and the use of matching materials are particularly important for front extensions.
- 3.2 Extending a detached house to the **side** will also need special care. While flat roofs may sometimes be acceptable for single-storey side extensions, two-storey extensions should have a pitched roof with the pitch and materials matching the existing house. Windows should also match. With two-storey extensions, a space appropriate to the character of the plot, and at least 1m (3ft 3ins) in width, should normally be left along-side the boundary. This will help to prevent a “terracing” effect, which could be harmful to the street-scene.
- 3.3 Single-storey **rear extensions** should not normally exceed 6m (20ft) in length. Flat roofs are only acceptable for single-storey extensions and even so a pitched roof is usually preferable.
- 3.4 With two-storey extensions, it may be necessary to reduce the size of the proposal either to minimise any impact on neighbouring properties and/or to ensure the extension appears subordinate to the main house.

4.0 Extending a Semi-Detached House

- 4.1 If built up to the boundary with the attached property, to avoid adversely affecting the property, **front extensions** should not project more than 1.4m (4ft 6ins). Porches set away from the boundary may be larger, but should be in keeping with the appearance of the house.
- 4.2 **Side extensions** usually look better if set back from the front of the house. Two-storey side extensions should normally be at least 1m (3ft 3ins) away from the boundary. (Where it is proposed to build over an attached garage to the side, see the special note below.)
- 4.3 **Rear extensions** should not normally exceed 4m (13ft) in length. Two-storey extensions must avoid overlooking, overshadowing or overdominance problems for the houses on either side. This can depend on the aspect, but a general rule is that the two-storey element should not encroach beyond a 40 degree line taken from the

edge of the nearest first-floor window of a habitable room of neighbouring properties. The roof pitch on two-storey rear extensions should match the pitch of the existing house.

5.0 Building over the Garage

5.1 Where the whole width of a plot is already built up, a first floor extension on top of an attached garage built up to the common boundary may be acceptable provided:

- it is set well back from the front elevation of the house to avoid a “terracing effect” which can be harmful to the street-scene;
- it does not occupy more than half the depth of the house (i.e. the rear half);
- it does not give rise to difficulties over maintenance for the neighbour.

6.0 Extending a Terraced or Town House

6.1 Front extensions and porches should not project more than 1.4m (4ft 6ins) in front of the house.

6.2 Single-storey rear extensions should not be more than 3m (10ft) deep.

6.3 With two-storey rear extensions special care is needed to ensure they do not overlook, overshadow or overdominate houses on either side. A general rule is that the two-storey element should not encroach beyond a 40 degree line taken from the edge of the nearest first-floor window of a habitable room of neighbouring properties.

6.4 Two-storey extensions across the whole width of the rear elevation are not likely to be acceptable.

7.0 Roof Conversions and Dormers

7.1 Roof extensions or dormers should relate to the scale and window style of the original house or bungalow. They should not be so large that they produce a top-heavy effect. Over-large roof extensions can detract from the appearance of a whole area.

7.2 Dormers should be set above the eaves line, lower than the ridge line and set in from the gable ends.

7.3 In some cases, rooflights will be more acceptable than dormers. The inclusion of rooflights will not normally require planning permission.

8.0 Garages

8.1 Garages are best located at the side or rear of the house. Only occasionally will it be acceptable for garages to be built in front gardens; in such cases, careful attention

will need to be paid to the issues of siting, size and design to ensure that the character of the area is not harmed.

8.2 Garages should not be too high or bulky in relation to the main house or the character of the surrounding area.

9.0 The Character of the Area

9.1 All conversions and renovation work should respect the character of the area.

9.2 Overly large extensions, the use of cladding, the movement of walls or fences, or the choice of inappropriate materials or window design can easily harm the whole street-scene.

10.0 Planning Principles for House Extensions

10.1 In considering planning applications for house extensions, the Council will take into account all of the advice set out in this Design Guide, in particular:

- any undue overlooking, overshadowing or overdominance of neighbouring properties should be avoided;
- extensions should complement the scale and appearance of the existing property, particularly in terms of bulk, materials and design;
- extensions should normally be subsidiary to the original building, unless the proposal involves the re-modelling of the whole house or bungalow in a way which is sympathetic to the street-scene;
- extensions should harmonise with the scale and proportions of properties in the immediate locality;
- a usable amount of amenity space should be retained for the enjoyment of the residents after the extension has been built;
- extensions should not harm existing trees (trees in a Conservation Area or which are the subject of a Tree Preservation order are afforded special protection).

10.2 Other policies of the local planning authority may also be relevant, for example in Conservation Areas (policy HE1) or in the Oxford Green Belt (policy GS3). It is particularly important to note that the size (measured by volume) of extensions to houses in the Green Belt is restricted by policy GS3 of the Local Plan.

Useful Addresses

For advice on Development Control, Planning Policy, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Building Control contact:

Vale of White Horse District Council
The Abbey House
ABINGDON
OX14 3JE Telephone: (01235) 520202

For advice on the selection of an Architect:

Clients' Advisory Service
Royal Institute of British Architects (Southern Region)
Massey's Folly
Church Road
Upper Farringdon
ALTON
GU34 3EH Telephone: Winchester (01420) 587393

or visit www.ribafind.org

For Highways Advice contact:

Oxfordshire County Council
Oxfordshire Highways
Southern Area Office
Milton Road, Drayton
ABINGDON
OX14 4EZ Telephone: (01235) 531331

For advice on crime prevention contact:

Thames Valley Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor for Oxfordshire
Witney Police Station
WITNEY
OX28 6JN Telephone: (01993) 893875

