

# Residential Design Guide – Extending Your Home

**DRAFT DOCUMENT FOR  
CONSULTATION  
PURPOSES ONLY**

## **CONTENTS**

### **Introduction**

**Section A. Side extensions**  
*Detached properties*  
*Semi-detached properties*  
*The terracing effect*  
*Adversely affecting your neighbour*  
*Points to remember*

**Section B. Rear extensions**  
*Orientation & overshadowing*  
*Overbearing – the 45° rule*  
*Overlooking*  
*Garden size*  
*Points to remember*

**Section C. Dormer windows**  
*Points to remember*

**Section D. Garage conversions**  
*Points to remember*

**Section E. Conservatories**

**Section F. Porches**

**Section G. General points to consider**  
*Characteristic details:*  
*Materials*  
*Brick detailing*  
*Roof design & windows*  
*Siting the extension*  
*Trees*  
*Good neighbourliness*  
*Disabled access*  
*Listed buildings & conservation areas*  
*Building Regulations*

**Useful Contacts**

## Introduction – The Purpose of this Guide

This guide has been produced to assist you in the design of your house extension. The purpose of this guide is not to prescribe rules and regulations, but to assist you in getting the design right first time. Extending your home is something that is often only done once in a lifetime, and an unsightly or poorly designed extension could possibly devalue your home, or inhibit its future sale. This guide should help you to achieve a well-designed extension, which will positively enhance your existing home, both in function and appearance.

The Council seeks a high standard of design to house extensions to ensure that the extension is appropriate to the character and appearance of your existing property, and the existing streetscene around your property. It is also the Council's responsibility to ensure that any extension to a property that requires planning permission will not cause unreasonable impacts to the surrounding neighbour's enjoyment of their own properties.

This guide clearly defines what is considered to be appropriate to the Council in the majority of cases, and should be used to assist you, your planning agent or architect in making a successful planning application.

The guide is divided into different sections relating to different types of extension. There is also a list of basic design points to remember which relate to most types of extension.

Before you design your extension:

1. Read this guide carefully and take into account the points raised – they will assist you in deciding the most appropriate location for your own extension and how much additional space you are likely to realistically be able to achieve.
2. Analyse your home – what are its characteristics, what shape and size are the windows and doors, what shape is the roof, how much space is there around your home, what materials is it constructed from, how much garden area do you have?
3. Analyse your street – what are its characteristics, how much space is there between properties, how far back are the properties from

the road, how do people define their boundaries, what are the houses like next door to yours and across the street?

When the Council assesses a planning application it refers to its planning policies. The current policies broadly state that when designing your house extension there are two essential rules to remember:

1. Your extension must be of a style, form and design that is appropriate and respectful to the character and appearance of your existing house.
2. Your extension must not unreasonably impact upon the amenities enjoyed by your neighbours.

Each of these points will be explored in more detail through the various sections of this guide. It is well worth reading the whole guide, as a number of the points raised will apply to different types of extension.

As a general note, there may be examples of extensions near to you, or in other locations across the city, which were constructed before this guide was published, and do not comply with its principles. These extensions will not be considered as setting precedence when assessing your proposed extension. Just because a similar extension received planning permission in the past, does not necessarily mean that you will receive planning permission for your extension. The city council is committed to ensuring a high quality of design to house extensions and will seek to ensure that the principles within this guide are fully implemented.

## Section A – Side Extensions

Side extensions can be extremely difficult to get right. The key is to ensure that the overall design of the extension is sympathetic to the design of the original building, and the overall character and appearance of the streetscene.

### Detached Properties



Original House

On a detached property it may be possible to have an integrated approach in order to make the extension appear as though it has always been part of the original house. It is unlikely that this approach would be suitable for semi-detached properties as it is likely to detract from the balance of the semi detached pair.



Example A.

In example A the side extension is the same height as the original house and is on the same building line. This design would be considered unacceptable as it is out of scale to the existing house as it is too wide. The new windows are also not in keeping with those used on the original house.



Example B.

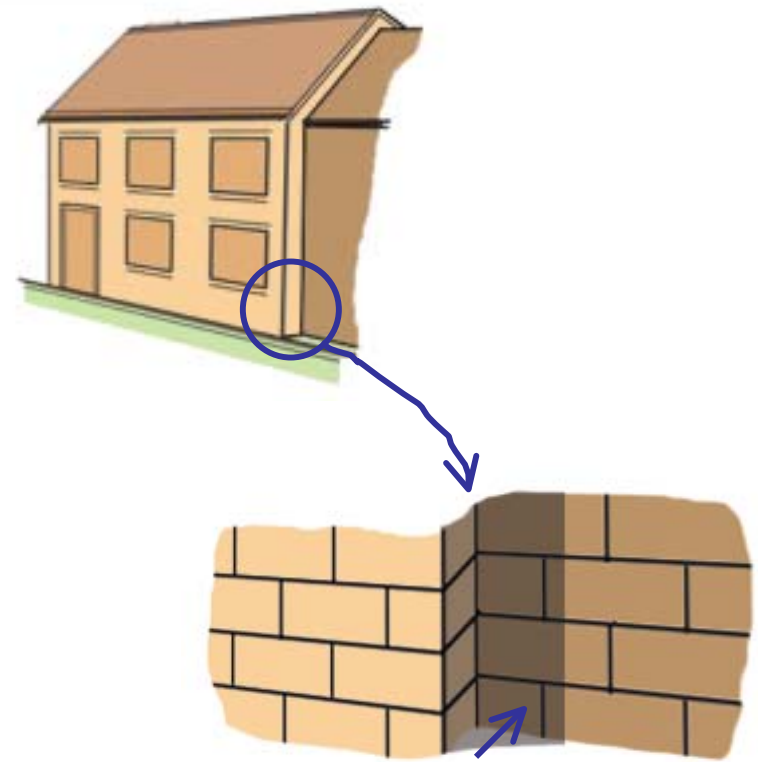
In example B the side extension is of a much more appropriate scale and the characteristic features of the original house have been carried across to the extension. This extension would be more likely to receive planning permission than example A.



Example C.

In the final example, C, the extension has been set back from the main building and set down from the main roof and eaves lines. This extension appears subservient to the original house and does not detract from the character and appearance of the existing house. This style of extension would also normally be considered acceptable.

When constructing any extension to your home it is crucial that the new materials match and properly blend into the existing house. Unless your property is very modern, it is likely that your original bricks have weathered and changed in appearance. When you construct your extension, even if it is from the same type of bricks that were originally used, there will be a distinctive difference in the appearance of the extension compared to the original house. There are specialist brick matchers and suppliers who can help you source the right bricks that will provide an acceptable match. If an **exact** match cannot be found then it may be more appropriate to set the extension back slightly (perhaps two or three brick widths) so that there is a neater join in the materials and a more acceptable visual appearance.



## Semi-detached Properties



Original pair of semi-detached properties symmetrical and well balanced.

On a semi-detached property it is crucial to make sure that the extension does not detract from the character and appearance of not just your property but also the pair of properties as a whole. When looking at a pair of semi-detached properties it is important that they appear as a balanced pair. In most circumstances a two storey side extension to a semi detached property will require setting back from the front of the original property and setting down from the existing ridge line. This will make the extension appear more subservient, or passive.



Example A.

In example A, one of the properties has had a side extension. When the properties are now viewed from the front they appear unbalanced and your eye naturally wanders over to the extension.



Example B.

In example B the extension is much more appropriate in terms of scale and has been set down from the main roofline and eaves, and set back from the front of the property. Now when viewed from the front the pair still remains strong and balanced with your eye primarily drawn back to the original pair of properties rather than to the extension.



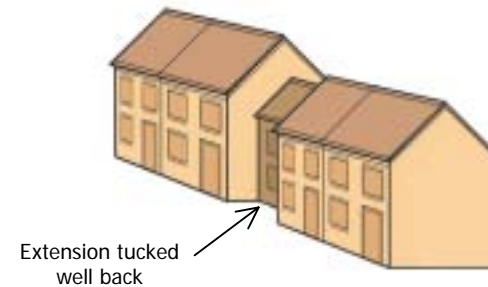
SIDE VIEW

Side View – the extension is set back from the front of the property and set down from the main ridgeline. This brings the eaves line lower and makes the extension appear more subservient.

Where the spacing between properties in a street contributes strongly to the character of that streetscene, particular care is required to ensure that the rhythm of the streetscene is not adversely affected. In the example below the semi-detached properties are spaced very regularly. In some cases where the spacing is a strong element of the character of the streetscene, a side extension just may not be appropriate.



In other examples, like the one below, it may be possible to reduce the impact to the streetscene and the visual appearance of the spacing between the properties by setting the extension back from the front of the property by a suitable distance. This will ensure that as people pass along the street the properties still maintain a sense of the original spacing and rhythm.



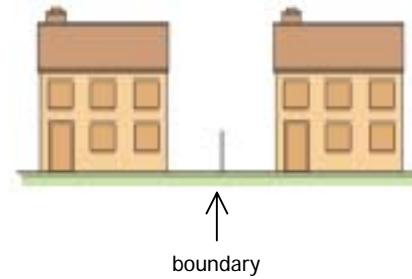
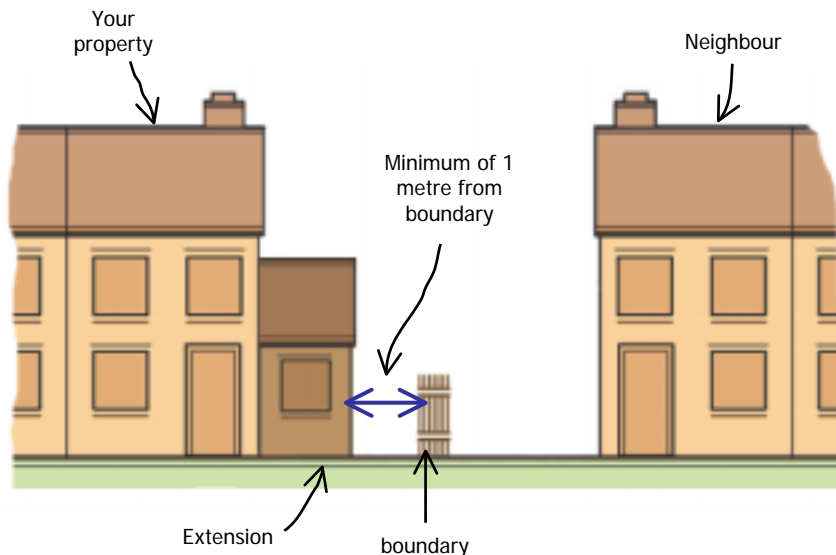
The side extension is barely visible to those passing by, as it is set well back from the front of the original house. It is only when viewed directly from the front that the extension is fully visible. Setting the extension right back has successfully maintained the feeling of space around the properties which is an important characteristic element of the streetscene.

## Terracing Effect

How the existing property sits within its own plot, the spacing around it and the character of the existing streetscene are all important considerations.

In all cases extensions should be set in from the neighbouring boundary by a minimum of 1m. In terms of the visual effects of side extensions, this can help to ensure that the streetscene does not appear cramped. It will also help to prevent a terracing effect should your neighbours also extend their property. On a practical level it will ensure that sufficient space remains to allow for future maintenance, and will ensure that your property is not devalued should it become a terrace.

In some cases a single storey side extension may fall within your Permitted Development Rights and may not require the benefit of planning permission. However, you should still carefully consider the design of the extension and the distance it is located from your boundary. This is particularly important if you intend to construct a further extension above the single storey extension in the future. By locating the single storey extension close to the boundary you may be restricting your chances of gaining future approval for a first floor addition.



These two detached properties have even spacing between them.



The property on the left erects a garage right up to the boundary fence



The property to the right erects a single storey extension up to the boundary a few months later



The property to the left then erects a first floor extension above the existing garage. The streetscene begins to appear cluttered as the spacing between the properties reduces.



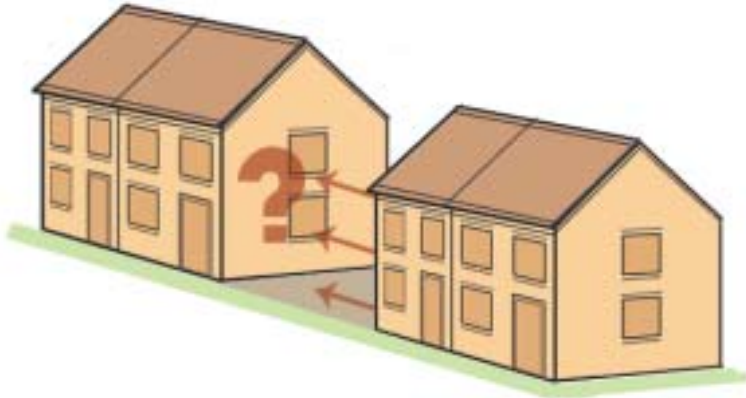
After a few years both properties have first floor extensions up to the boundary. This has ultimately resulted in the visual effect of terracing. Situations such as these could have been avoided by ensuring that the original single storey extensions were set in from the boundary by a minimum of 1m.

## Adversely Affecting your Neighbour

For each and every application made a planning officer will visit your home and assess your proposal and how it may affect both your neighbours' enjoyment of their property and the character of the area. If you are considering a side extension you must look carefully at your neighbour's side elevation. The positioning, design and mass of your extension must not have an adverse impact on any primary windows to habitable rooms that may be present in the side of your neighbour's property. These may include windows serving the living room, dining room, kitchen or bedroom. Of less concern are windows serving hallways, landings and bathrooms.

If your extension would adversely affect a window to a habitable room in your neighbour's property, planning permission would normally be refused.

Other issues which could result in adverse effects to your neighbour which would then normally result in the refusal of a planning application include: overlooking, overshadowing, loss of light and loss of privacy. These issues are explored in more detail in Section B of this guide.



To make a side extension work successfully it is imperative that the characteristics of the original house are carried across to the extension. This will involve the window design, the spacing between the windows, the roof shape, the materials, any patterns or detailing on the brick work and any other elements which may be visible on the original house and form part of its character. More advice can be found in Section H of this guide.

## Points to remember:

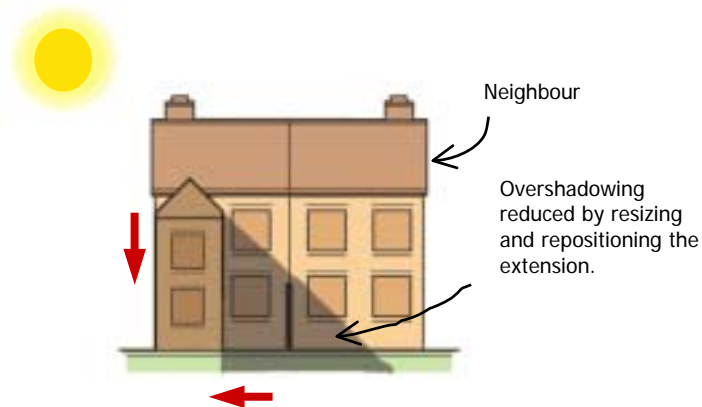
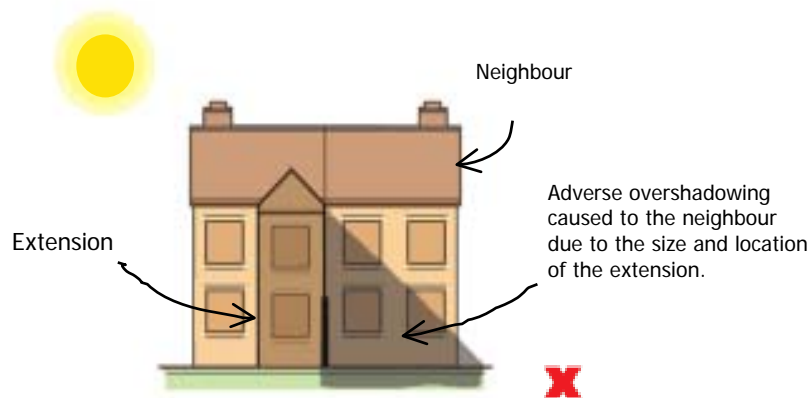
- Set side extensions on semi-detached properties back from the front and down from the ridge of the existing property by a sufficient amount to ensure that the extension will look subservient to the original house and not adversely unbalance the pair.
- Ensure that your side extension will not have an adverse impact on any primary side windows in your neighbour's property.
- Look at the spacing between properties in your street. Is there a strong established pattern that your extension may disrupt? If so you may have to reduce the size of your extension or set it back from the front of the existing house and down from the existing ridge height. If the spacing between the properties is such that it is very important to the streetscene it may be that a side extension would normally be considered unacceptable.
- All side extensions must be set in from the side boundary by a minimum of 1m.
- Ensure that the design of the extension matches the design and key characteristics set in the original house.

## Section B – Rear Extensions

The Council will require the design of rear extensions to take into account the following points:

### 1. Orientation – Overshadowing

Look carefully at the path of the sun throughout the day. Consider where shadows fall and use this information to help you position your extension. The City Council will not permit applications that result in adverse overshadowing to neighbouring properties.



The extension has been moved away from the neighbour's property and has been set down in height. However, this will now cause adverse overshadowing to your own property. This will cause a loss of light to your existing rooms. Whilst the council will not normally refuse an application if it causes harm to your own enjoyment of your property, make sure that you consider the impacts before you make your application. In the case illustrated, an extension in this location may not be wholly appropriate.

### 2. Overbearing

The City Council will not permit extensions that are overbearing to the people who live in neighbouring properties.

As a general rule of thumb to check whether or not your extension will be overbearing to your neighbour's, apply the 45 degree rule explained below.

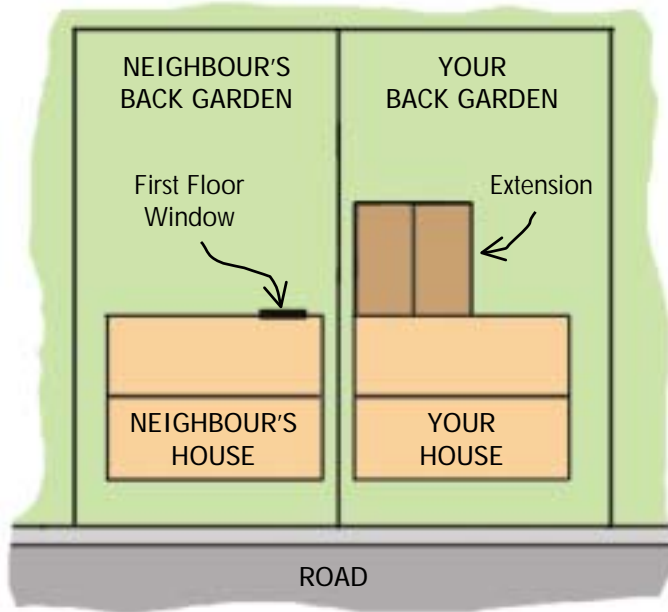
There are two methods for applying the 45 degree rule, the first considers the depth and width of the extension and the second looks at the height. In both cases if the extension breaks the 45 degree line then it would normally be considered unacceptable.

This rule should be applied to both single storey and two storey extensions.



Firstly draw your proposed extension in plan form and then also accurately plot on your neighbour's property and the position of any first floor windows to habitable rooms on to the plan. See image A.

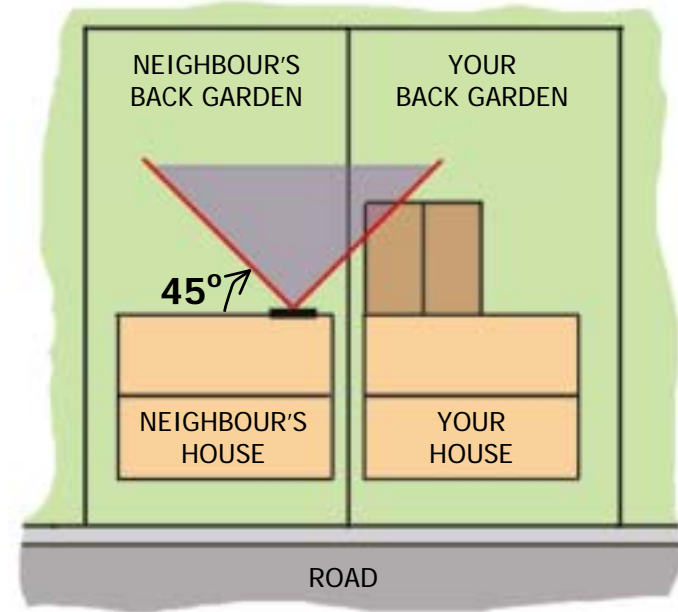
Image A.



In this example there is only one neighbour to the side. If your property is between two properties, make sure that you include them both.

Mark the centre point of your neighbour's window and from this point draw a 45 degree splay line as illustrated in image B. The illustrated in image B. would be considered unacceptable as it is partly located within the 45 degree splay lines. This extension would be unacceptably overbearing to the neighbours.

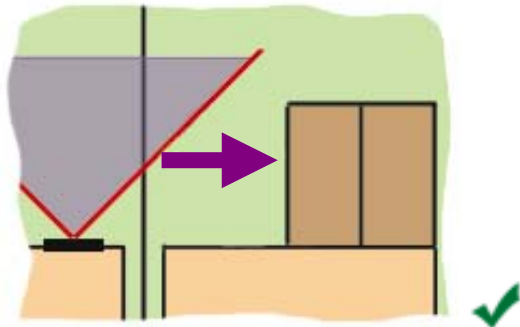
Image B.



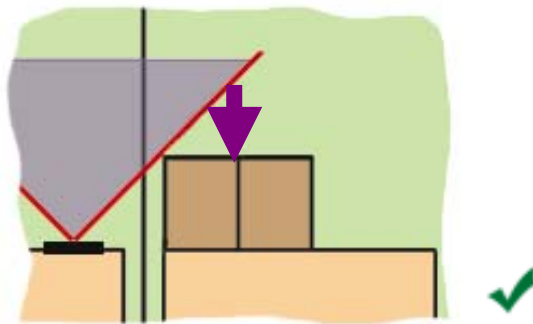
If the extension does lie within the 45 degree splay then you will need to redesign it in order to reduce the impacts to your neighbours and make the extension acceptable. There are various ways to redesign the extension to make it less overbearing.

You could push the extension away from the 45 degree line.

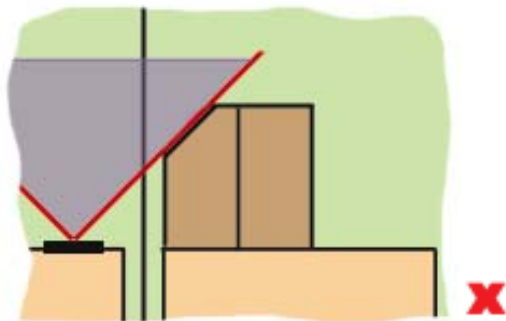
Option 1. Relocate the extension



Option 2. Reduce the depth



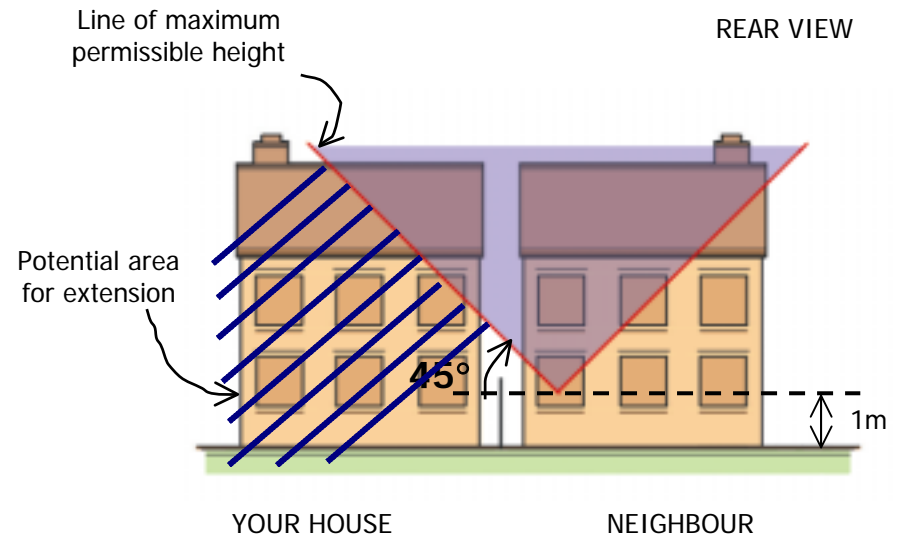
Option 3. Unacceptable



Chopping off small sections to leave uncharacteristic angles, as in Option 3, will not normally be permitted, as it is unlikely to produce a form of extension that is in keeping with the original house.

The second method is to determine the maximum height normally allowed for the extension. Draw the rear elevation of your property and any neighbouring properties. Make sure that your elevations reflect any changes in levels between your property and your neighbours. Mark 1m above ground floor level in the centre of your neighbours nearest habitable ground floor window to the extension.

From this point draw the 45 degree splay lines towards the site for the extension. This will then indicate the maximum permissible height. If your extension breaks this line then it would normally be considered unacceptable.



The 45 degree rule to establish the maximum permissible height, width and depth of an extension provides a good general guide to what is normally considered acceptable. However, it is only a general rule of thumb and a planning officer may on occasion consider an extension to be unacceptable even though it may appear acceptable on paper.

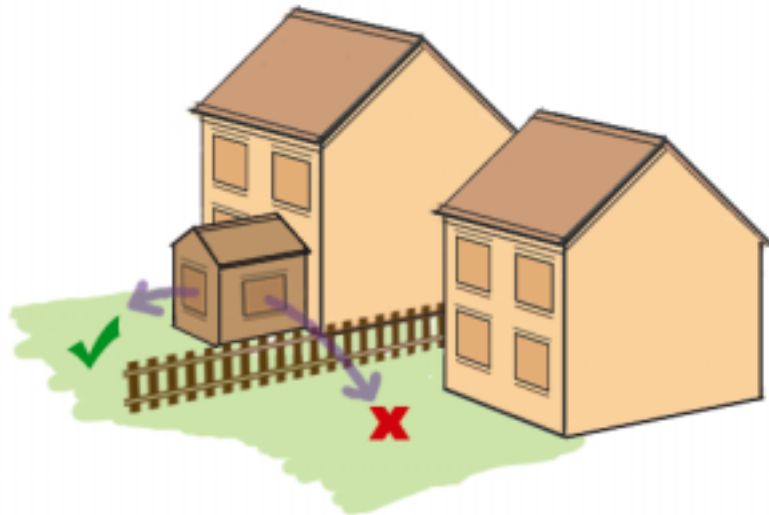
It is advisable to locate any extension as far from the 45 degree lines as practically possible to reduce the impacts to your neighbours and thereby increase your chances of producing an acceptable extension.

### 3. Overlooking

The Council will not permit extensions that will result in adverse loss of privacy to your neighbours. Windows in the extension must therefore be positioned extremely carefully.

First floor side windows, which look directly across to your neighbour's property or garden, should generally be avoided and will not normally be permitted unless they are obscure glazed and non-opening. This may have implications for building control who require each bedroom to have at least one means of escape in case of a fire. If this was the only window in the room it would not comply and could only sensibly serve a landing or bathroom (mechanical ventilation would also be required).

Ground floor side windows which look directly across to your neighbour's property or garden, will only be permitted if there is an adequate fence in place which would prevent any overlooking. An adequate fence is considered to be solid and be of an appropriate height so that when stood inside the extension (as the floor level will vary from the outside ground level) there is still an adequate amount of fencing to obstruct any overlooking. If your current fence is inadequate it may be appropriate to include alterations to the fence as part of your planning application for the extension.



### 4. Garden size

A rear extension will reduce the amount of garden area. The City Council will only grant planning permission for extensions that retain an adequate amount of garden area suitable for that type of dwelling. This will largely depend on the size of the existing garden in comparison to the size of the existing house.

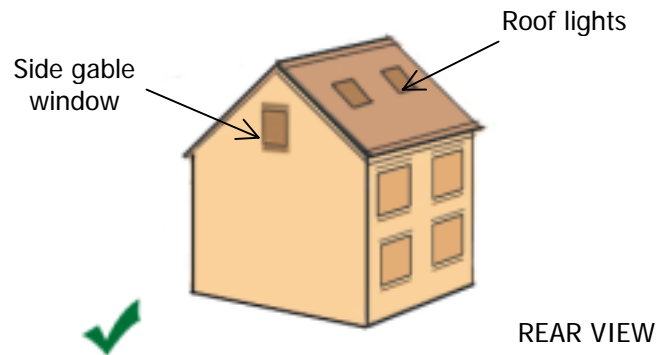
As a general rule, a rear extension should not cover more than one quarter of the original garden area.

#### Points to remember:

- Carry out the 45 degree test on your proposed extension. Does it pass? If not it is likely that planning permission would normally be refused.
- If you are proposing windows in the sides of the extension, are the current boundary fences or walls adequate enough to prevent overlooking or loss of privacy to your neighbours? If not reconsider the positioning of the window or include improvements to the boundary treatment within your planning application.
- Consider how much the proposed extension will overshadow your own property and any neighbouring properties. If a planning officer considers the overshadowing to be adverse to your neighbours, then your application would normally be refused.
- Work out how much of the garden area will be taken up by the extension. How much will remain as usable garden area? Will this be sufficient for your requirements?
- Ensure that the key characteristics of the main house such as materials and window design and spacing are reflected in the extension.

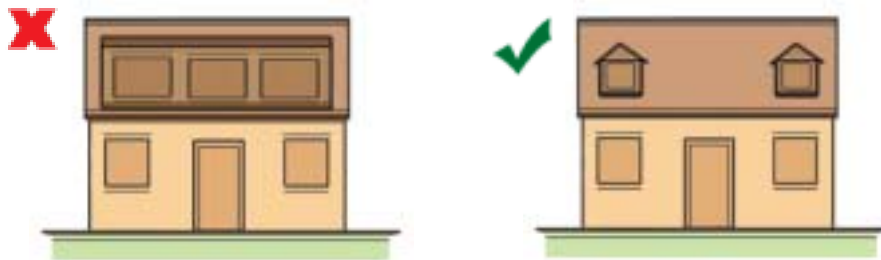
## Section C – Dormer Windows

Dormer windows can be a very prominent feature with the potential to dominate the character and appearance of the original house. The best solution to create light in a loft conversion is roof lights, which should be located on the least prominent roof face, usually the rear. It may also be possible to add a side gable window providing that it will not result in overlooking or loss of privacy to your neighbour.



If dormer windows are unavoidable then it is important to keep their size to a minimum and to keep them as low as possible from the main ridgeline of the roof. The design of dormers should reflect that of the main roof and the windows used should match the window style of the house.

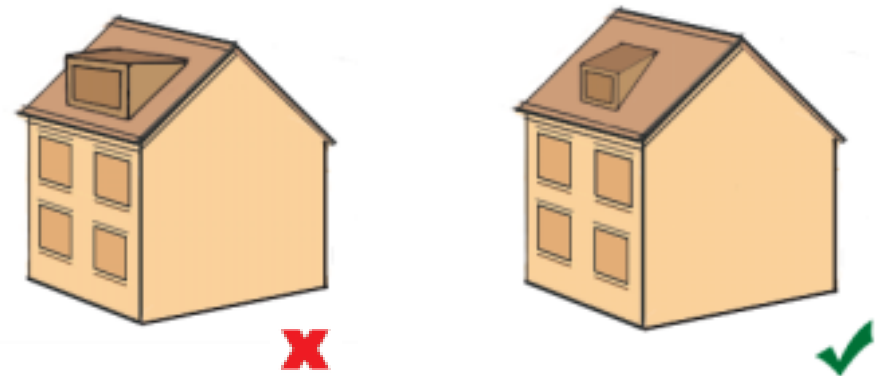
The dormer should not be overly dominant, it should sit comfortably on the roof and appear as part of the roof, as if it was part of the original design and not an obvious addition.



As the dormer window is generally located in an inaccessible position carefully consider the practicalities of cleaning and maintenance. Consider minimising surfaces such as barge boards and fascias, which will require regular painting, and if appropriate consider a window that can be tilted inwards for safe cleaning.

### Points to remember:

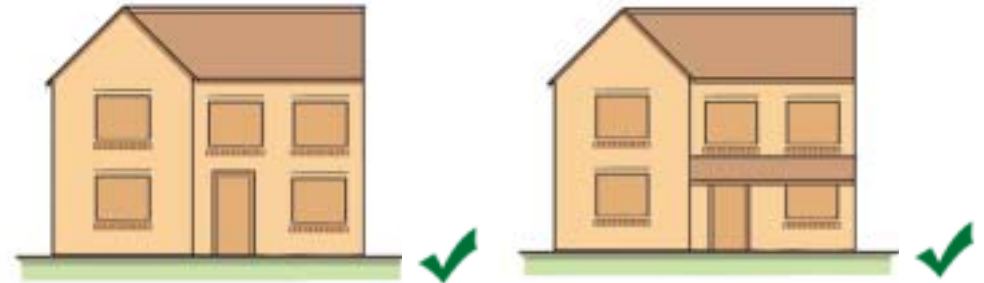
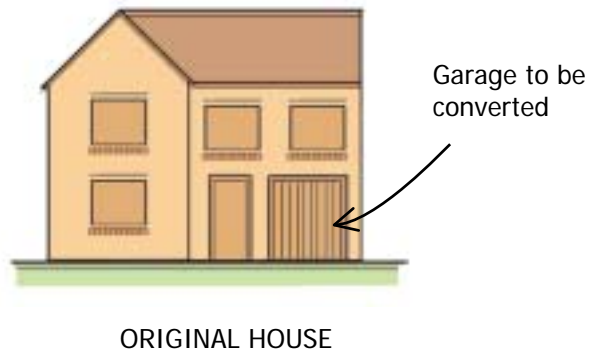
1. If a dormer window is unavoidable, it should ideally be located at the rear of the property.
2. The dormer extension should not be overly dominant.
3. The dormer extension should be constructed below ridge level and above the eaves.
4. The extension should be constructed in materials to match or harmonise with the existing roof materials.
5. The design and location of windows on the dormer extension should harmonise with the windows on the original dwelling.



## Section D – Garage Conversions

Garage conversions can be an extremely useful solution to obtaining more living space without having to undertake a large amount of construction. The City Council will only permit garage conversions if the external appearance of the new frontage is well designed and sits harmoniously with the rest of the house and does not appear awkward in the wider streetscene.

The key is to use materials, window styles and other characteristics which match the rest of the house.



Appropriate conversion with correct window style and size, matching bricks and detailing.

Canopy porch added to further integrate the conversion with the rest of the house.

There are currently no national or local planning policies that require the city council to consider the effects of the loss of parking spaces when determining a planning application for a garage conversion. This means that the loss of parking is not a valid planning reason to refuse such an application, unless there is technical expert evidence available to demonstrate that the loss of a parking space will have a detrimental effect on highway safety. As such it is your own responsibility to consider alternative parking options for your vehicle(s).

If you have an attached double garage but only wish to convert one of them into living space, then this should normally be the one closest to the main body of the house. This will ensure that the conversion looks appropriate and appears to be an integral part of the house rather than a recent conversion.

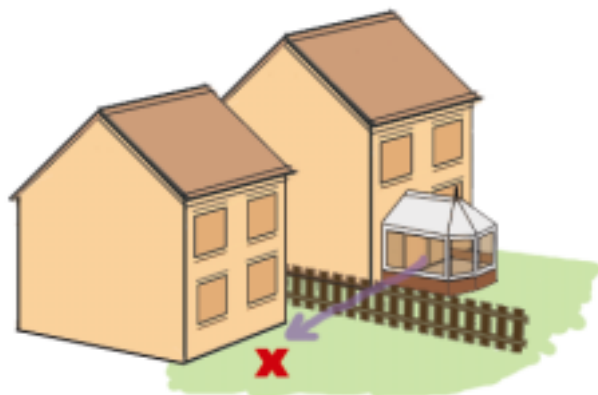
### Points to remember:

1. Use a window in a matching style and size to those on the existing house.
2. Use bricks to match the existing house and copy any detailing used.
3. If you have a car, consider where you will park it once the conversion is complete.

## Section E – Conservatories

When assessing an application for a conservatory the City Council look closely at the positioning of the conservatory and its design in order to ensure that there will be no adverse effect on the occupiers of any neighbouring properties.

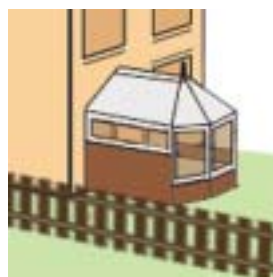
A particular problem with conservatories is that they can result in loss of privacy and overlooking to the neighbouring properties. There are a number of methods available to deal with this problem, which can include: having an appropriately sized close boarded fence (taking in to account internal floor levels), obscure glazing to the side, incorporating solid panels to the side, or having solid brick work to the side.



Unacceptable overlooking caused by the windows in the side of the conservatory.



Increase the height of the fence



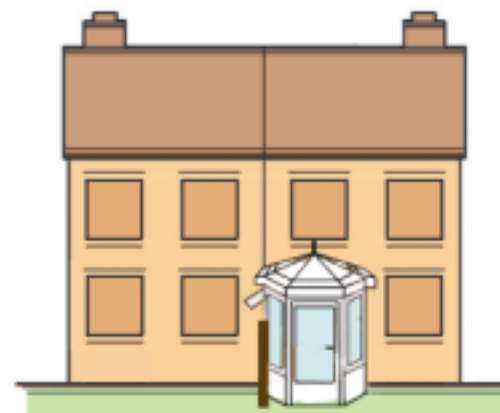
Brick work to the side with high level windows



Obscure glass to the side



Ensure that the conservatory can be fully accommodated on your land within your own property boundaries. If you build right up to the boundary it is likely that the guttering will overhang. You will need your neighbour's permission to do this, and you will also need to serve notice on them when you apply for planning permission (see planning application form pack for further guidance on serving notice). It is in the interest of good neighbourliness to set the conservatory in from the boundary to reduce the impacts to your neighbour and to ensure that the conservatory is fully contained within your boundaries. This is also useful for future maintenance.



The positioning of this conservatory is very impractical as the guttering and the open side windows overhang the neighbouring boundary. There is also no room to maintain the side of the conservatory or the boundary fence.

The conservatory will also have to pass the 45 degree test as detailed in section B, to ensure that it will not be overbearing to your neighbour, or result in an unacceptable amount of overshadowing. Setting the conservatory in from the boundary by approximately 1m can help to ensure that it will not be overbearing.

The design of a conservatory is also an important consideration, particularly on period properties or on those properties, which are orientated in such a way that the conservatory will be visible from the streetscene. Applications for conservatories on listed buildings will only normally be permitted if they are constructed from timber and are of a high quality of design appropriate to the character and appearance of the building. Plastic conservatories will not normally be permitted on Listed Buildings.

## Section F – Porches

The first impression of a property is often set by its entrance. The design of a porch should reflect the character and appearance of the existing house and sit harmoniously on the elevation. This can be achieved by ensuring that the style, proportions and materials used match that of the existing house.

Ready made, off the shelf porches, particularly those made of UPVC, may be cheaper solutions but they may not suit the style and design of the original house.



This porch is unsympathetic in terms of the materials used and its overall depth and appearance. Planning permission for this style of porch would normally be refused.



This porch is constructed in materials that match the original house. A well-designed porch, which is sympathetic to the original house, will normally receive planning permission.

When deciding on the design of a porch, look at the wider streetscene. If your property forms part of a terrace then whilst you may wish to personalise it, you may be having a negative effect on the appearance of the wider area.



ORIGINAL TERRACE



Terrace with a number of additional porches – all of which are inappropriate and spoil the appearance of each house and the overall appearance of the terrace and streetscene.

## Section H – General Points to Consider

### Characteristic Details

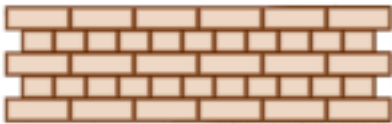
As previously mentioned, it is very important that the characteristics of your house are reflected in your extension. Particular attention should be given to the following elements:

### Materials

When matching bricks you will need to look not only at the colour but the size, texture and finish. Also look at how the bricks are laid in your existing house and ensure that you use the same technique for your extension.

Below are some common brick bonds:

English Bond



Flemish Bond

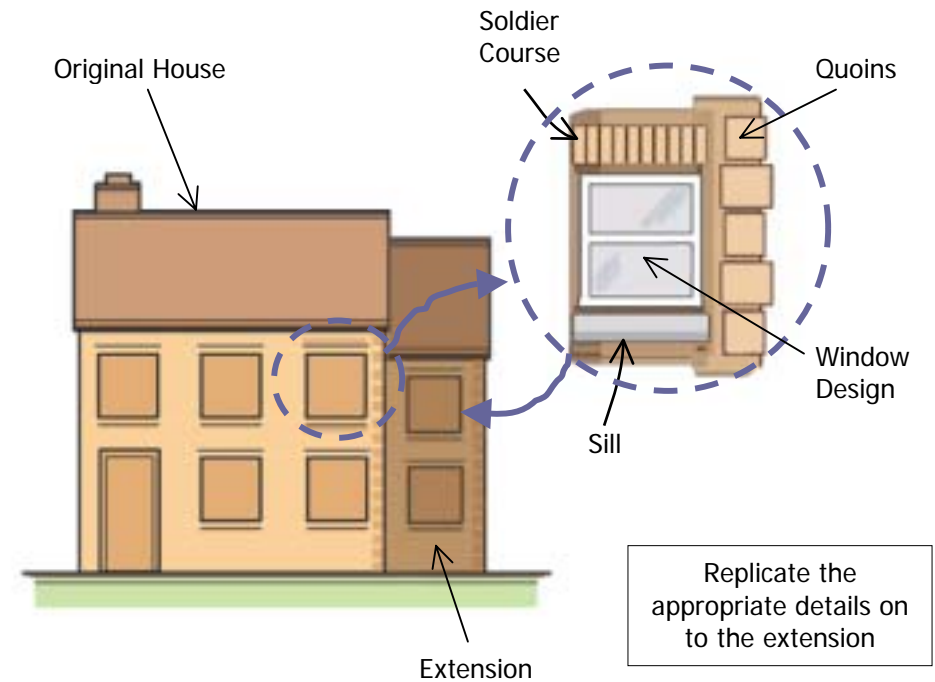


Stretcher Bond



## Details

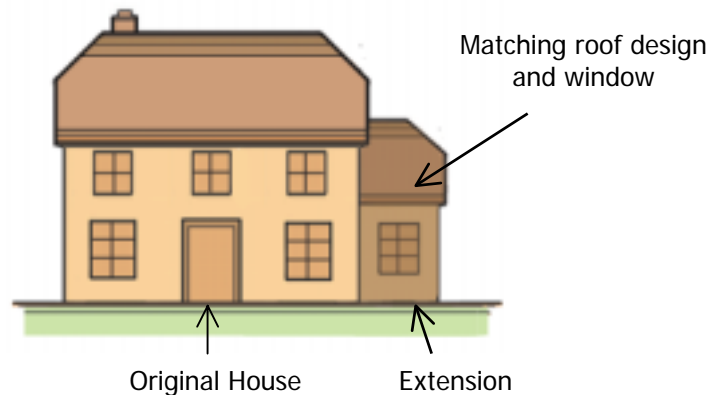
House designs vary enormously, and so it is extremely important that time is spent considering what are the current characteristics of your home. Look carefully at any detailing in the brickwork like some of those listed in the sample below and be sure to include those that are appropriate in the design of your extension.





## Roof design & Windows

As with other characteristics, roof design varies enormously from one property to another. Any extension should reflect the roof design of the existing property and ensure that the extension appears to be part of the original house.



Flat roofed extensions are best avoided as they can present long-term maintenance problems and rarely appear as though they blend harmoniously with the existing property.

Gloucester currently has the largest population of urban gulls in the country. When designing any new roof structure the city council will encourage applicants to consider gull protection methods. Further information about gulls and preventing nesting and roosting on your property can be obtained by contacting Meyrick Brentnall on 01452 396829.

Windows should be matching in style and proportions to those used in the original dwelling. The ratio of solid wall to openings should also be reflected in the extension.

## Siting the extension

In all cases front and side extensions should always be set in at least 1m from the side boundary to ensure that the extension does not contribute to the terracing effect.

In the case of rear extensions ensure that the whole extension, including the foundations, are contained within your own property boundary. If this is not possible then you will be required to seek the relevant consent from your neighbour. You will also be required to serve notice to your neighbour when you make a planning application. (details of how to do this are contained within the planning application packs)

## Trees

Wherever possible you should site your extension to avoid the removal of significant and healthy trees. Also ensure that if a young tree is to remain close to the extension that it has room for future growth. This will help to ensure that the tree does not have to be removed in the future should it begin to affect the structure of the extension. If the loss of a tree is unavoidable, a replacement should be planted in another location within the site.

Every effort should be made to avoid damage to trees during building works, including damaging roots. Officers are available to advise about protecting trees close to building works. Please contact a member of the Council's landscaping team on 01452 396897 for further information.

## Good Neighbourliness

Although the final decision rests with the Council, or in the case of an appeal the Planning Inspectorate, it is always a good idea to envisage what the extension would be like if you actually lived next door. Would you feel blocked in or overlooked? Would the extension feel too close or cause a loss of light to your habitable rooms?

By examining what it would appear like from your neighbour's point of view you can often gain a little insight into what is and is not acceptable. Ask

yourself 'Would I like this extension next door to me?' and 'Would this have a negative affect on the enjoyment of my home?'

Generally the city council encourages potential applicants to consider discussing their proposals with their neighbours before an application is made. The benefits include:

- Your neighbours will feel that you have made effort to keep them informed.
- It can avoid your neighbours becoming alarmed when they receive our notification letter.
- It may also enable you to make some small changes to your plans to accommodate your neighbours concerns and avoid written objections, which can complicate and delay your application.

### **Disabled Access**

There is no requirement under the planning legislation or Building Regulations to create disabled access to your proposed extension. However you might care to consider providing a ramped access to any new external doorway to your extension so that visitors with mobility difficulties can gain access more easily. The doors should then have a clear width of 800millimetres. This would also make access easier for the elderly, pushchairs and furniture removal. Further advice on this issue can be obtained from our Building Standards and Control Section (tel:01452 396771).

### **Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas**

Special care and attention is required when extending a Listed Building or a property within the Conservation Area. Please refer to the City Council's guides 'Listed Buildings in Gloucester' and 'Conservation Areas in Gloucester' or contact a member of our conservation team on 01452 396855 or 396194 for further advice.

### **Building Regulations**

The majority of extensions will require building regulations and you are advised to contact Building Standards and Control on 01452 396771 for further information.