



GUIDELINES FOR EXTENDING YOUR HOME

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Guide explains how the Council will consider the design of your extension when you submit your planning application. Its purpose is to guide you, the applicant or your agent and architect, as to what is likely to be acceptable to the Council in the vast majority of cases. It will also help your neighbours, and other interested parties, who may be affected by your planning application. This guidance applies to houses, flats, maisonettes and houses in multiple occupation.
- 1.2 Although some extensions may be “permitted development”, as defined by The Town & Country Planning General Permitted Development Order and therefore would not require planning permission, it is worth remembering that, even if this is the case, that unsympathetic alterations which are not in keeping with your neighbourhood can devalue your property.
- 1.3 Whilst the guidelines are an aid to good design you should understand that individual cases do not always fit easily into a particular category. The advice in this leaflet does not apply to Listed Buildings or to buildings in Conservation Areas, where more strict criteria may apply. Other criteria also apply in rural areas and areas liable to flooding. In such cases further advice should be sought from the Council's Development Control Service. If your proposal does not meet these guidelines please submit a brief statement with your planning application to justify the reason.
- 1.4 The policies contained in existing adopted development plan (Wokingham District Local Plan, Policies WOS3 “Development Control Principles” and WBE1 “Design and New Development”), relating to design of extensions to existing dwellings are very general and do not give specific advice.
- 1.5 This guideline was the subject of public consultation and prepared in accordance with national Planning Policy Guidance note 12 “Development Plans” (PPG12), paragraph 3.16. It was adopted by the Council, on 30th September 2002, as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and as such is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

2.0 General Issues

- 2.1 Whether or not your application is approved will depend upon:
 - (i) Its effect on the general street scene and
 - (ii) Its effect on the amenity of the occupiers of nearby properties.



- 2.2 You should design your extension so that it is in character with the original building and with the general neighbourhood in which it is located. The scale and proportions of the extension should respect the form of the original building (see Fig. 1) and not dominate or unreasonably overshadow adjoining buildings or garden areas or result in undue loss of privacy.
- 2.3 You may not be able to extend your property as much as you want if it would result in loss of light to your neighbours. In considering whether a proposal would result in an unacceptable loss of light to an adjoining property the Council will take into account the general advice contained within BRE report BR209 entitled "Site layout planning for daylight and sunlight: a good practice guide". This recommends a 45° angle if the extension is at an angle to a window (see Fig. 2) and 25° angle if direct facing. These provide a useful guide and if either are breached, the Council may refuse planning permission. However, the determining factor will be the overall impact of the extension on your neighbour's use and enjoyment of his/her property. Even if there is no technical daylighting issue, it may be that the extensions still could be considered to be overbearing.
- 2.4 In most cases, your extension should appear to be an integral part of the original building. Extensions should not be detrimental to the character of a street eg. by converting regular semi-detached pairs of houses into apparent terraces.
- 2.5 Extensions should generally have pitched roofs and where practicable, the pitch of the new roof should match the pitch of the existing main roof. This is especially important on corner properties where side and rear extensions can be seen from the street, and with first floor or two storey extensions. In addition, side extensions on corner properties should not project further than the rest of the dwellings in the street to the rear. This helps to preserve the spaciousness and the character of junctions.
- 2.6 Flat roofs are generally discouraged due to their appearance and increased risk of crime by giving easier access to first floor windows. They may, however, be acceptable on rear extensions where they can avoid unacceptable impact on a neighbouring property and where they are not visible from the street or areas of public open space. On certain designs of house they may be quite in keeping with the original.
- 2.7 In the case of a side to rear relationship, between the application site and the neighbouring house, or vice versa, a minimum distance of 12 metres should be maintained between houses at first floor level in order to allow for sufficient distances between dwellings and to avoid loss of privacy (refer to Fig. 3).
- 2.8 The materials you choose for your extension should as far as possible match those of the existing buildings. Where a new roof joins an existing roof it is good practice to use saved tiles ie. those taken off part of the



old roof and reused on the parts of the roof visible from the street to help the extension to blend in.

- 2.9 The windows of your extension should relate to those of the existing building in terms of size, proportion, positioning and detailing to help ensure the extension blends in well.

3.0 Neighbours

- 3.1 It is a good idea to discuss your proposal informally with any neighbour who may be affected before making your planning application. Once the application is received by the Council, your immediate neighbours will be consulted for their formal views.
- 3.2 If the foundations encroach onto a neighbour's property, or if the extension overhangs or is attached to a neighbouring property, permission will have to be given by the owner of the adjoining property affected by the proposal. These are matters of civil law, and not planning matters, and therefore cannot be taken into account in dealing with a planning application or a reason to refuse the application. However, a deed between the two owners may have to be drawn up to cover these issues.
- 3.3 If the proposal involves work to a joint party wall, a wall crossing a boundary or excavation near a neighbouring building, The Party Wall etc Act 1996 may apply. Separate leaflets on this are available from the Council's Building Control Section. In addition a neighbour's consent may be required if access to their property is necessary during construction or for maintenance. Finally, there may also be covenants (restrictions set out in the deeds relating to the property) which may restrict the type of development on a property. Again these are not planning matters which affect the consideration of a planning application. Therefore you will need to check this out first.

4.0 Front extensions and porches

- 4.1 The impact on the street is of paramount importance when determining applications for extensions to the front of properties, due to their prominence in the street and their relationship with neighbouring properties, the depth of front gardens and amount of trees and shrubs. Generally two storey front extensions are not acceptable and single storey extensions, other than porches, should not project significantly from the main front wall of your home.
- 4.2 You may construct a porch to a greater depth (maximum of 2 metres) provided it does not result in an unreasonable affect on neighbours, the neighbourhood or 'streetscene'.
- 4.3 Larger front extensions may however be acceptable where one or more of the following applies:



- (i) your home is detached and is set well back from a road in a good sized plot
- (ii) there are a number of similar extensions in the immediate area
- (iii) an adjoining dwelling or garage already projects to the front.

5.0 Rear extensions

5.1 The main considerations for the Council in determining proposals for rear extensions will be to protect your immediate neighbours and the enjoyment of their property and to safeguard the overall appearance of the area. Particular attention will be given to protecting their privacy, daylight and sunlight, and that the extension is not unduly overbearing. In addition your extension should not affect your neighbour's opportunity to extend their property in the future.

Single storey rear extensions:

- 5.2 In normal circumstances, rear extensions on or close to a side boundary should not project more than 3 metres from the main rear wall (see Fig. 4). Any greater depth required will be judged on its merits ensuring that there is no adverse impact on neighbours in terms of loss of light and the extension being overbearing (refer to paragraph 2.3).
- 5.3 Generally you should avoid having windows and doors at the sides of your extension to prevent overlooking and therefore loss of privacy.
- 5.4 The eaves height (ie. the bottom of the roof) should normally not exceed 3m, whether a flat or pitched roof is proposed, and where possible it should be lower than this. Pitched roofs should be designed to minimise bulk and to avoid an overbearing appearance. Hipped roofs can therefore be preferable to gabled or lean-to roofs. Bigger extensions may be acceptable where there is an adjoining extension of a similar depth or height, or where it can be shown that there is no material loss to your neighbour's privacy, outlook or sunlight/daylight (refer also to paragraph 2.3).

Conservatories

- 5.5 The same guidelines for side and rear extensions apply to conservatories. However, as they are lightweight structures it is possible for these criteria to be relaxed in certain circumstances. Applicants should ensure that conservatories which are close to boundaries do not result in loss of privacy to an unacceptable degree.

Two storey rear extensions:

- 5.6 In addition to the above criteria for single storey extensions, two storey rear extensions need careful design so as not to be overbearing, cause overshadowing and loss of privacy.



- 5.7 *Terraced dwellings:* Two storey rear extensions are seldom acceptable on terraced properties as they nearly always adversely affect one or both of the neighbouring properties.
- 5.8 *Semi-detached and detached dwellings:* The first floor should be set in from the party boundary (a minimum of 2.5m is recommended) and should not project by more than 3m. In any event these should be within the 45° angle (drawn in a horizontal plane) from the nearest part of a window to a habitable room of a neighbouring window to ensure that there is no adverse impact on neighbours in terms of loss of light to habitable rooms (see Fig. 2). Utility rooms, bathrooms and garages do not count as habitable rooms. Kitchens may be considered to be habitable rooms depending on their size.
- 5.9 Windows in the side walls at first floor or above are unlikely to be acceptable (particularly where they form the prime light source to a habitable room). This is because of the loss of privacy they would cause for neighbouring properties. The use of obscure glazed windows and non-openable or with only a top fan light being openable can in some cases be acceptable eg. in the case of a bathroom/ensuite but are generally discouraged in other circumstances. Similarly, balconies or use of flat roofs for balconies are unlikely to be acceptable because of the potential for overlooking, although they may be appropriate for large houses on substantial plots where there is no loss of privacy.

6.0 Side Extensions

Single storey side extensions:

- 6.1 Single storey side extensions should follow the criteria for rear extensions where they join or are close to the boundary of your neighbour's property. They should be:
- (i) no more than 3m high at eaves level
 - (ii) have a pitched roof and, if appropriate, a hipped roof
 - (iii) project no more than 3m from the rear of main wall of the house
 - (iv) project no more than 1m forward of the main wall of the property

Windows and other openings in the side elevations should be avoided.

Two storey or first floor side extensions:

- 6.2 In designing a two storey or first floor side extension you must consider the streetscene and ensure that your extension would not affect the possibility of the adjacent property being extended in a similar manner. You may also wish to consider whether a gap needs to be maintained for access.
- 6.3 Side extensions to properties at road junctions or other features, such as an area of open space, should not project further out than the houses in

the road to the rear of the property, so as to protect the spacing and character of the road (see Fig. 3).

- 6.4 *End of terrace properties:* Side extensions to end-of-terrace properties should fit in with the rest of the houses in the terrace.
- 6.5 *Semi-detached properties:* You should design your side extensions to your semi-detached house so that they do not create a terracing effect. Side extensions should therefore be set back at first floor level, by a minimum of 1m from the main front wall of the house, and should include a drop in the ridge line, thus creating a break in the roof line and ensuring that side extensions do not entirely fill the gap between neighbouring pairs of semi-detached houses (see Fig. 2). They should also not be so large as to upset the overall balance of the pair of semi-detached houses.
- 6.6 *Detached properties:* Side extensions to detached dwellings may be constructed to the full height of the existing building as long as the extension looks like an integral part of the whole building and does not result in an overly bulky building. Hence, it is often good practice to include a setback from the front and a drop in the ridge line, as for semi-detached properties. Detached dwellings should not normally be extended up to both side boundaries as this would lose the important characteristic gap between properties.

7.0 Roof Alterations, Loft Conversions and Dormer Windows

- 7.1 Inappropriate roof alterations can have an adverse effect on the appearance of whole streets. Any changes to your roof therefore needs to be designed with care. In order to create first floor accommodation in single storey properties, eaves and ridge heights should not normally be raised by more than 0.75m unless the dwelling is next to taller buildings or ground conditions make it reasonable. In raising the ridge height you must consider any habitable room windows in your neighbour's property which may be affected. You should avoid converting hipped roofs of two storey and higher dwellings to gabled roofs as they can close down the characteristic spaces between buildings. Partial gabling may be acceptable.
- 7.2 You should keep dormer windows contained well within the body of the main roof by being set well back from the eaves and their sides well in from gables or party walls. They are unlikely to be acceptable if they extend beyond the ridge line and should preferably be set well below it. All windows at roof level should relate to the windows of the original dwelling in proportion, design and position (see Fig. 5).
- 7.3 Dormer windows facing the highway should have pitched roofs at a similar angle to those of the main roof unless other windows (eg. flat roofed dormers) predominate the neighbourhood or would match the



style of the dwelling. The total width of dormers and other rooflights facing the highway should not exceed half the width of the existing roof measured at its mid height to avoid a top heavy appearance.

- 7.4 Rear facing dormers can be flat roofed but should not extend across the full width of the property. The “cheeks” of the window should be set in from the gable or party walls by at least 0.3m.

8.0 Miscellaneous Issues

“Granny” Annexes or accommodation for elderly or disabled relatives

- 8.1 The principle of providing accommodation for elderly or disabled relatives in the form of an annexe is acceptable. However, it should not be a detached self-contained building capable of separate occupation from the dwelling and will need to be interconnected to the main dwelling. The annexe should be an integral part of the existing dwelling and would normally take the form of a single storey side or rear extension of fairly modest size.

Car Parking and Garage Conversions

- 8.2 If you are wanting to create an additional bedroom in a property of three bedrooms, you will, under the Council's parking standards, have to provide an additional parking space on-site. The need to provide alternative on-site parking can also apply if you are planning to convert your garage to residential accommodation. The minimum size of a space is 2.4m x 4.8m. In certain circumstances this requirement can be waived where the need to pave over the front garden would not be characteristic of the street and would detract from its appearance. As a general rule, no more than 70% of the front garden area should be paved over to create parking spaces and the use of porous materials are encouraged to reduce surface water run-off.

Garages in front gardens

- 8.3 Unless there are several examples in the immediate area, garages in front gardens are not acceptable as they can be intrusive in the street scene. Garages should normally be located to the side or rear of dwellings. The interior of a single garage should be at least 2.5m x 5.0m and that of a double 5.0m x 5.0m.

Amenity Areas

- 8.4 Many “open plan” housing developments contain areas of land planted with grass or shrubs etc. which adjoin the highway but are owned by people in adjacent dwellings. These add to the openness and appearance of the street scene. Due to conditions put in place when the original development was given permission, planning permission is often required before fences at the side of dwellings can be moved. The enclosure of these spaces into private gardens by moving boundary

walls, fences or hedges is seldom acceptable because of the impact on the openness of the street scene.

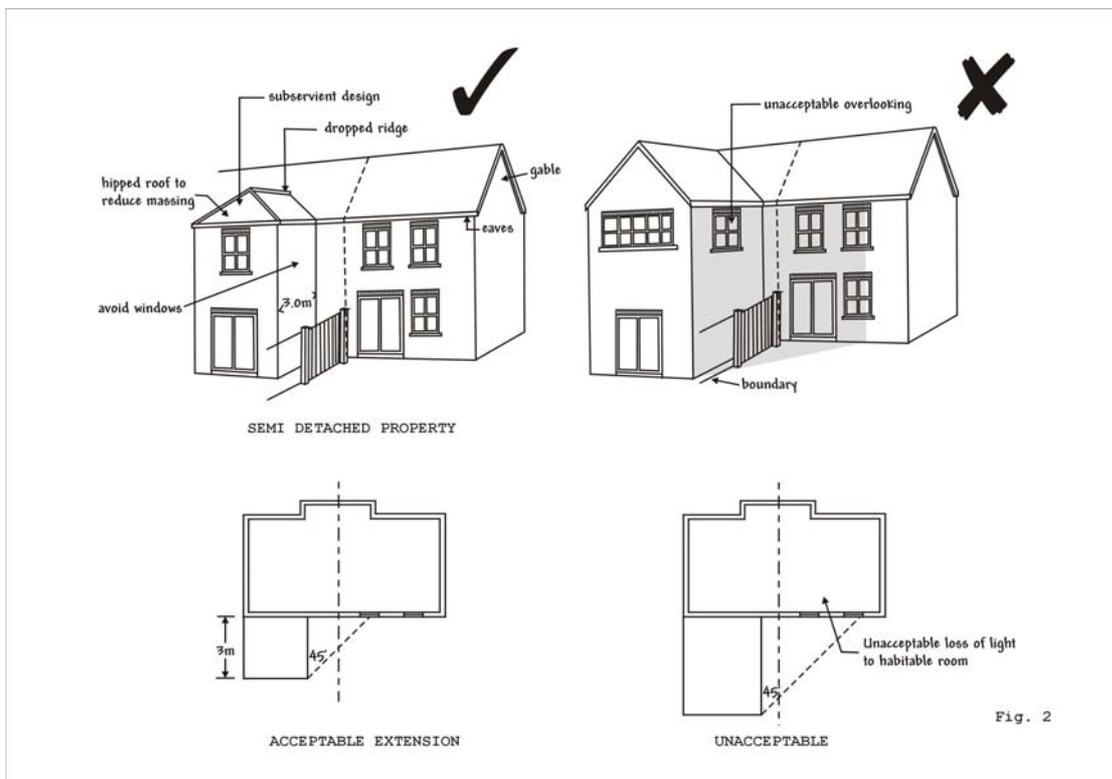
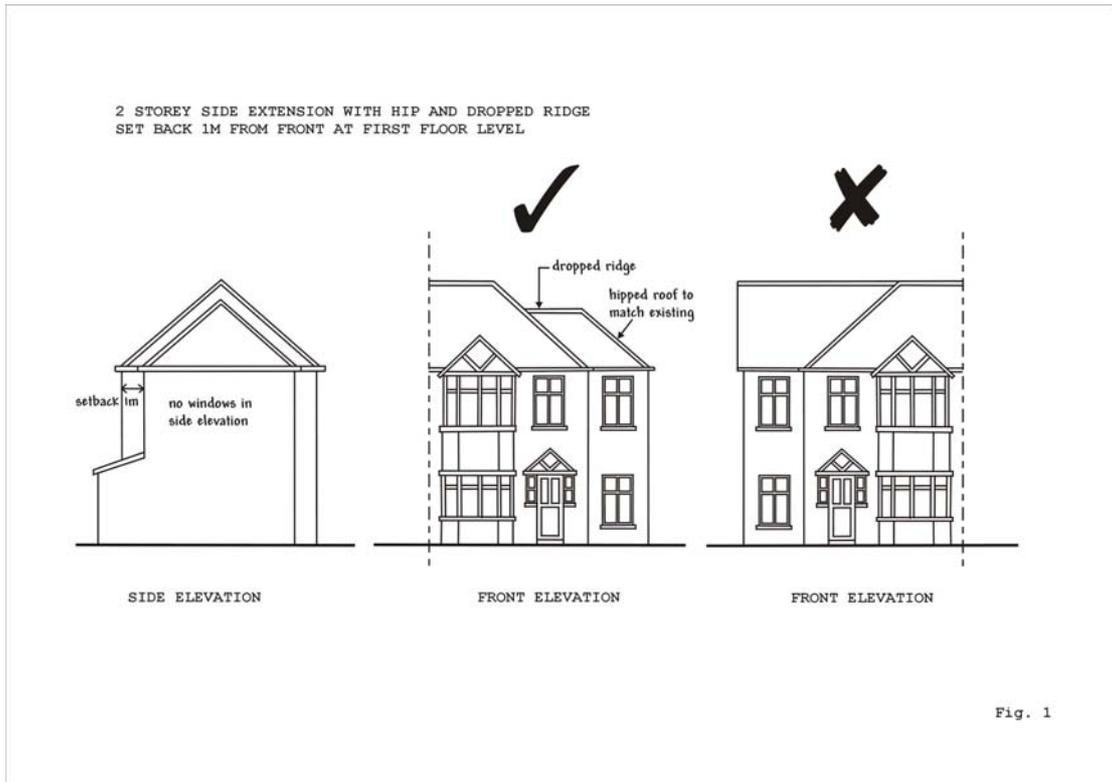
The boundaries to front gardens

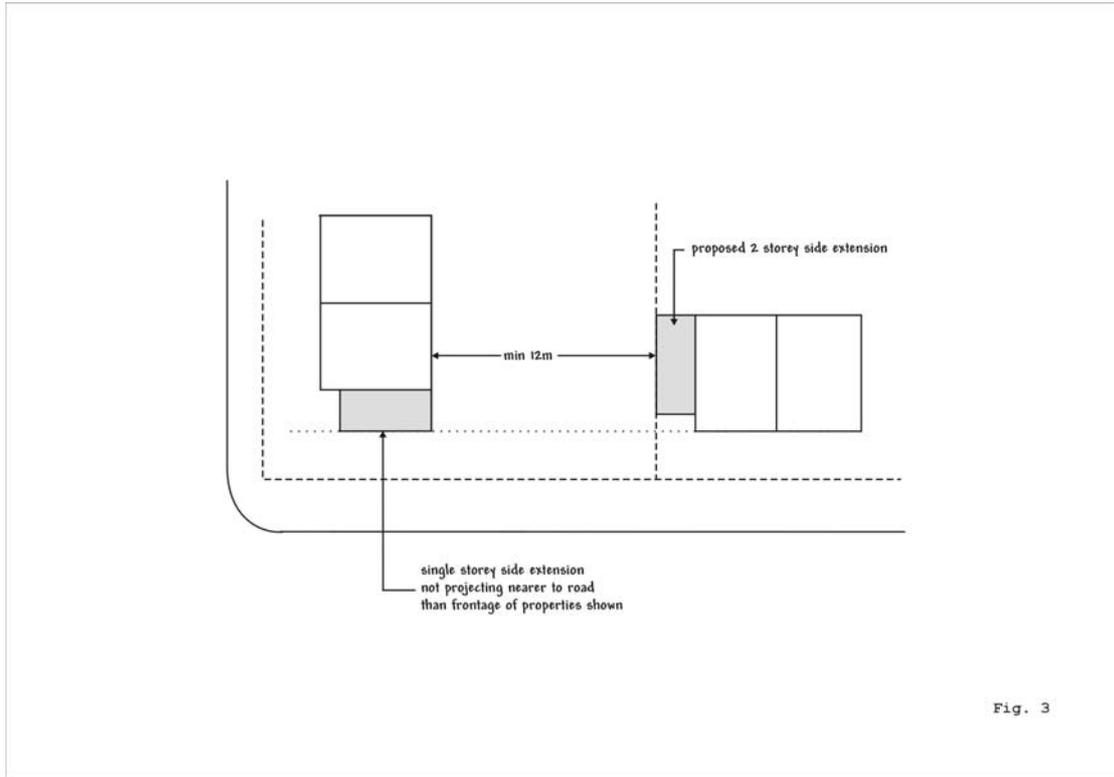
- 8.5 Except for “open plan” estates where garden walls and fences are not permitted because this would ruin the integrity of the original design, planning permission is not normally required for walls and fences of one metre or lower where the site adjoins a highway. Any fence or wall in such a location higher than this would require planning permission. This will only be granted where the fence or wall does not have an adverse impact on the streetscene or obscure drivers’ visibility at junctions.

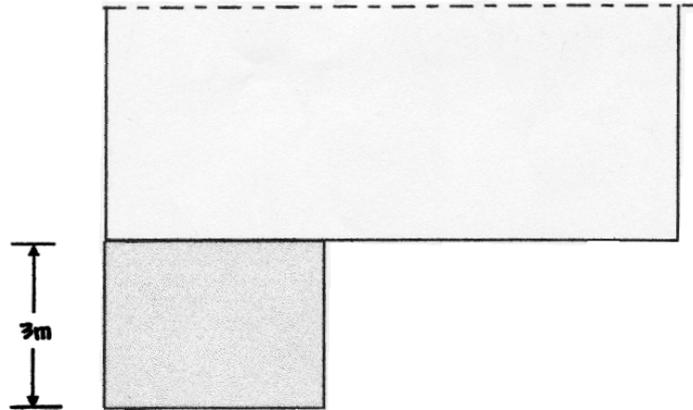
9.0 Further Advice

- 9.1 If you need any further advice, please contact the Council’s Development Control Service either by telephone on (0118) 974 6282 or in person during office hours. Other guidelines include on Access for Disabled People, Designing Out Crime, Sustainable Development, Protection of Trees on Development Sites, Landscape Plans etc. In addition, advice on the security of buildings at the design stage can be obtained free of charge from the Thames Valley Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor for Berkshire, on (01635) 295156 or by visiting the ‘Secured by Design’ website at www.securedbydesign.com.

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REAR EXTENSIONS ON OR CLOSE TO A SIDE BOUNDARY SHOULD NOT PROJECT MORE THAN 3M FROM THE MAIN REAR WALL

Fig. 4

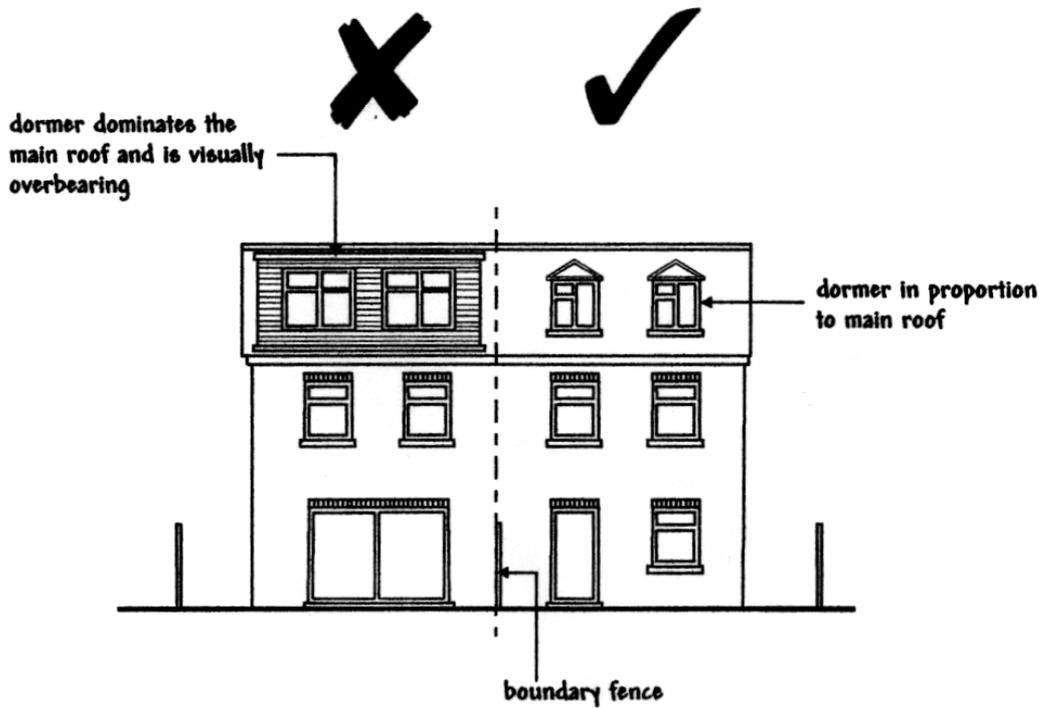


Fig. 5