HOUSE EXTENSIONS

Planning Guidance
Leaflet No. H2

Extensions to private houses need to be planned carefully. A poorly designed extension can upset the privacy and outlook of neighbouring properties, and spoil the appearance of the existing house. Where a number of such poorly designed extensions come to be built in a street of houses, then the whole appearance and character of the street may suffer. This leaflet, therefore, sets out the main points you should consider if you're thinking of extending your home.

This leaflet deals only with extensions to the ground and first floors of dwelling houses. If you're thinking of installing a roof dormer or loft extension, then you should look at Leaflet No. H3 "Loft Conversions".

You will also need to find out whether your extension will require planning permission or Building Regulation approval from the Council. The details of this can be found in Leaflet No. H1 "Permitted Development (Domestic)".

What are the planning issues in building a house extension?

You won't need to obtain planning permission from the Council for your house extension if it qualifies as "permitted development". You can check whether this is so by consulting Leaflet No. H1 "Permitted Development (Domestic)".

However, even if your proposal doesn't require permission, the Council would wish you to consider the position and appearance of the extension and its effect on the privacy of neighbouring properties. To take the sort of measures, in fact, which you would like your neighbours to take when they're planning an extension to *their* property.

It is these factors which the Council itself will be concerned with in those cases where planning permission is required.

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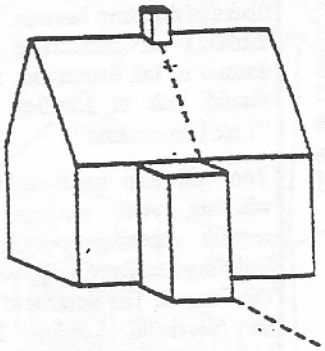
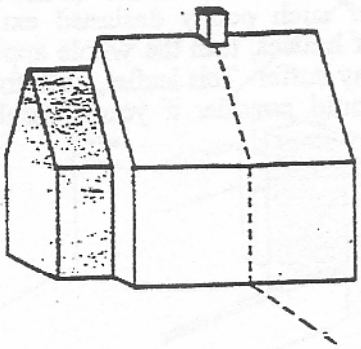
How will the extension affect the neighbours?

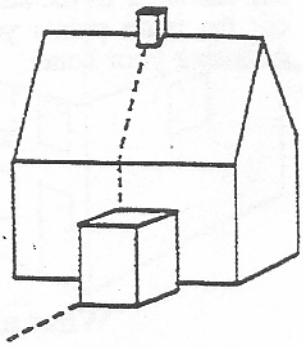
There are no hard and fast rules on this. It all depends on the height and depth of the extension, the amount of space around the house, and how the house relates to neighbouring properties. Where an extension is badly sited, it will spoil your neighbour's outlook and privacy, and will cause a reduction in the daylight and sunlight reaching the next door property.



A two storey extension at the rear of a house is not usually acceptable unless the extension is of a limited depth or if it is sited sufficiently far away from the windows of the next door property.



A two storey extension at the side of a house may be acceptable, provided there's sufficient space to avoid any serious loss of daylight to important windows in the flank wall of the next door property and to avoid a "terracing effect". This is explained further in "What about the street scene?" on the back page.



A single storey extension at the rear of a house is usually more satisfactory than a two storey extension. In most cases the extension should be no more than 2.8 metres in depth. Its height should be the minimum necessary to provide habitable space and should not of itself unduly affect the amenities of the adjoining properties.

Remember also -

- Don't put windows in the flank walls of your extension where it overlooks your neighbour's property. Also don't have direct access from the house to the roof of your extension or lay it out as a sitting out area.
- If the extension involves the loss of a garage or garage space, then this should be replaced elsewhere within your property.
- If you intend to leave a gap between the extension and the boundary fence of your property, make sure this space is sufficient to allow painting and maintenance to be carried out from within your property.
- Take care that any guttering on your extension doesn't project over the boundary of your property.
- Make sure the foundations of your extension don't encroach on your neighbour's land.
- Try to site your extension so as to avoid felling trees or clearing well established shrubbery.

Whenever the Council receives a planning application for an extension at the rear of a dwelling, it applies certain tests to see that the extension won't cause an unreasonable reduction in the light reaching neighbouring properties. Details of these tests are set out on the back page of this leaflet.

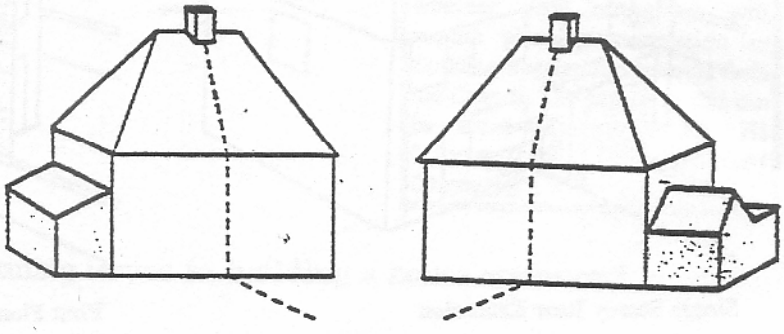
How well will the extension match the existing house?

In a suburban area such as Enfield, where much of the housing was built in Victorian times or between the wars, the building of house extensions using modern materials and styles can easily spoil the appearance of the original house. Where a number of such extensions come to be built along a street, then the character of the street as a whole can also be spoilt. Generally speaking, therefore, your extension should be so designed that the old and new parts of the house blend in as far as possible.

☐ Roof Type

In choosing the type of roof for your extension, remember -

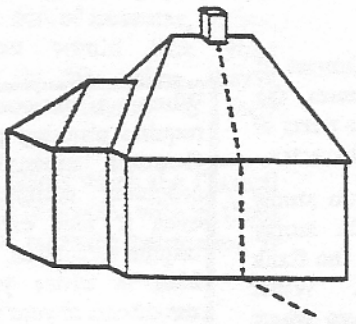
- All extensions more than one storey in height should have pitched roofs.
- If you're having a single storey extension at the rear of the house, then sometimes a flat roof is the best way to lessen the impact on the next door property. However, if your extension is visible from the street or across a number of gardens, then it will usually be more in keeping with the house if it has a pitched roof.
- A flat roof may require substantially more maintenance in the long term.



- A pitched roof is generally preferable in the case of single storey side extensions. However, this may not always be practical, especially if there are windows in the flank wall of the house. In such cases it may be possible to construct a "dummy" pitched roof on the front elevation of the extension. Then at least the part most visible to the general public will blend in with the existing house.

☐ Materials

Your extension will also need to be built with materials which match those on the house.



Where the materials can't be matched exactly, then it may be better to make a clear distinction between the existing house and the extension. One way is to set back the front wall of the extension and to use a subordinate style of pitched roof, as shown in this diagram.

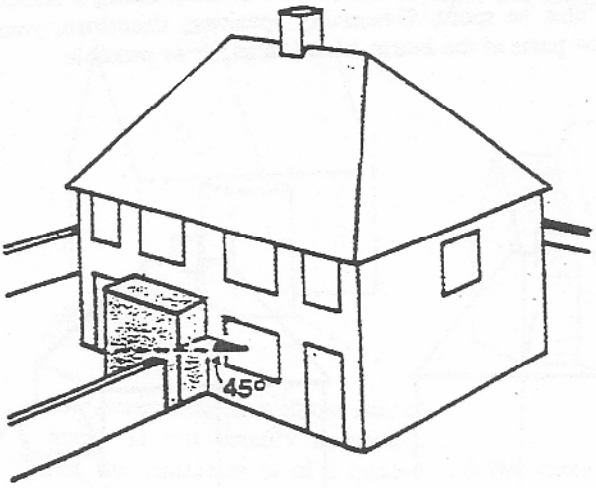
☐ Detailing

To make your extension blend in with the existing house, you will need to "borrow" as many details from the house as possible. Therefore -

- Make sure the design of windows and other joinery items matches that of the original house. They can be purpose-made to order and not only look better than new standard units but are longer lasting too.
- Position windows and doors with care so that the house doesn't look unbalanced.
- Make sure the eaves of the extension are in line with those of the existing house.
- Make sure that items such as soffits (the underside of the eaves), fascia boards (the boards to which guttering is fixed), string courses (a line of bricks of a different colour or style to the rest of the wall), guttering and rainwater pipework match those on the existing house.

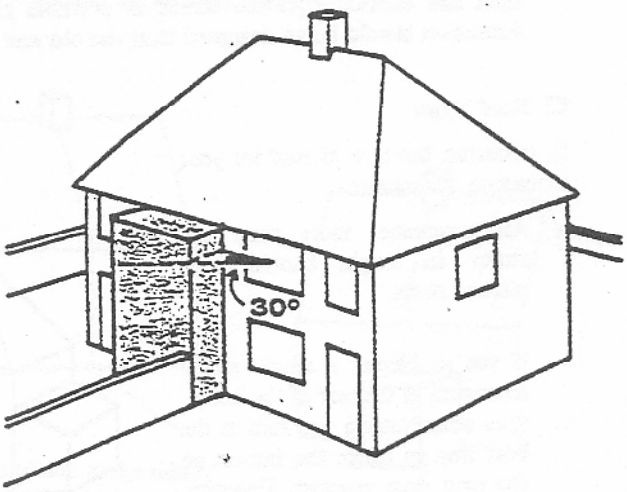
How can overshadowing be measured?

Whenever the Council receives a planning application for an extension at the rear of a dwelling, it applies certain tests to see that the extension won't cause an unreasonable reduction in the light reaching neighbouring properties. Even if your extension qualifies as "permitted development" (see Leaflet No. H1), the Council would recommend you to carry out this test on your proposals and amend them as necessary.



Single Storey Rear Extension

As stated on the second page of this leaflet, single storey extensions should be no more than 2.8 metres in depth. In cases where the site conditions allow an extension deeper than this, then it should not exceed a line taken at 45 degrees from the mid-point of the nearest ground floor window of any room of the adjacent properties. Its height should be the minimum necessary to provide habitable space and should not of itself unduly affect the amenities of the adjoining properties.



First Floor and Two Storey Rear Extension

The extension should not exceed a line taken at 30 degrees from the mid-point of the nearest window of any room at first floor level of the adjoining properties. The height of the walls should not exceed those of the existing house.

In both these cases, where the extension would affect more than one adjoining property, then the issue will be determined by the line from the worst affected property.

What about the street scene?

Remember that your neighbours may also wish to extend their homes at some time in the future. In a street of detached or semi-detached houses, the erection of a large number of side extensions could, over time, make parts of the street look more like a terrace and so spoil its previously open character.

For this reason the Council usually requires that in the case of two storey side extensions or first floor extensions over existing single storey extensions, a distance of at least 1.0 metres is maintained between the flank wall and the side boundary of the property at first floor level. Wider distances will be required where the properties are situated in an area where the character is essentially open and spacious.

If you live on a corner site and you want to put a two storey extension on the side of your house, then the Council will normally require you to leave a gap of at least 3.0 metres between the extension and the side boundary of the property.

Where a proposed extension requires planning permission, the Council normally consults adjoining occupiers. However, even if your extension doesn't require permission, it's still a good idea to advise your immediate neighbours of your intentions.

For further information contact the Development Control Service and the Building Control Service of the Department of Planning and Building Control.

Planning Guidance
Leaflet No. H3

LOFT CONVERSIONS

Many homeowners in recent years have decided to convert the loft space of their property into an extra bedroom or into additional living space. Such loft conversions, and in particular the erection of roof dormers, need to be planned carefully. Otherwise they can easily upset the privacy and outlook of neighbouring properties and spoil the appearance of the existing house. This leaflet sets out the main points you should consider if you're thinking of carrying out a loft conversion.

This leaflet deals only with loft conversions to dwelling houses. If you're thinking of building an extension to the ground or first floor of your home, then you should look at Leaflet No. H2 "House Extensions".

You will also need to find out whether your loft conversion will require planning permission from the Council. The details of this can be found in Leaflet No. H1 "Permitted Development (Domestic)".

Remember also that a Building Regulation Application must be made for all loft conversions.

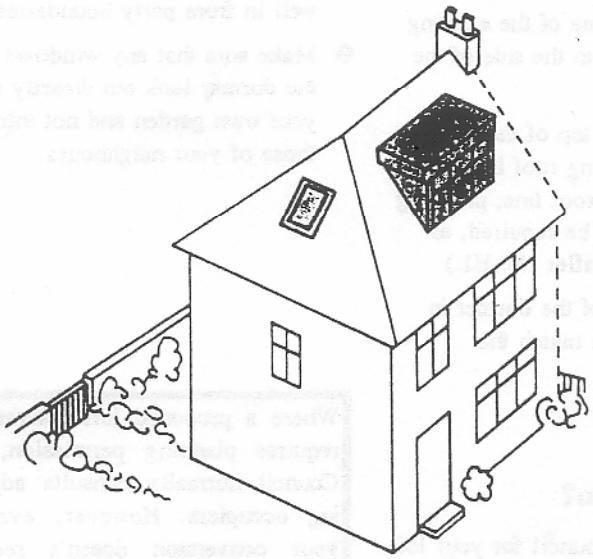
What's involved in making a loft conversion?

In building a loft conversion you will need to increase the amount of headroom in the loftspace, provide natural lighting, and install a staircase to the required standard.

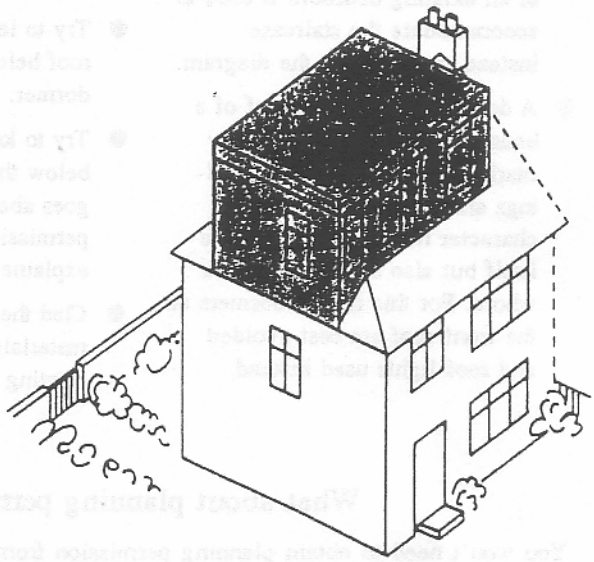
In a house where the loftspace is particularly spacious, then headroom may not be such a problem and natural light can be provided by installing rooflights. In most of the terraced and semi-detached houses found in the Borough, however, it will be necessary to install a roof dormer.

Such dormers can give rise to certain problems -

- The style of the dormer may spoil the appearance of the original house, especially if the dormer is flat-roofed and very large in size.
- The windows of the dormer may increase the amount of overlooking of neighbouring properties.



GOOD - Roof extension carried out using a rear dormer contained within slope of roof. Windows match those of house. Use of rooflight on side roof avoids overlooking. Roof lights could also be used on front roof.



POOR - Roof extension above ridge line of existing house. Windows don't match. Whole effect very obtrusive. Spoils character of street scene.

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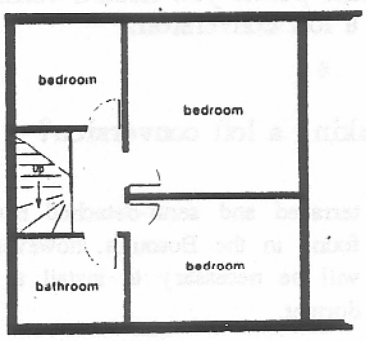
How well will the loft conversion fit in with the existing house?

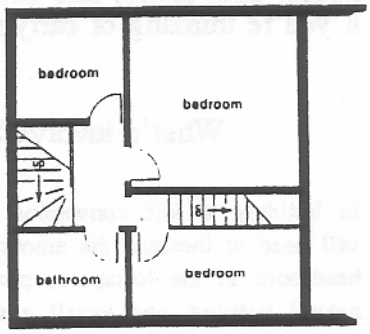
In a suburban area such as Enfield, where much of the housing was built in Victorian times or between the wars, the construction of large roof dormers using modern materials and styles, can easily spoil the appearance of the original house. Where a number of such dormers come to be built in a street, then the character of the street as a whole can also be spoilt. Generally speaking, therefore, you should try to make sure that any dormer required for your loft conversion blends in as far as possible with the existing house and doesn't overlook neighbouring properties to an unreasonable degree.

☐ Positioning

- The rear roof of the house is usually the most satisfactory position for a dormer, provided it's in keeping with the general appearance of the house.
- A dormer on the side roof of a dwelling should be avoided since it can make the whole house look very unbalanced. Such side dormers are usually needed so that the existing staircase in the house can be continued upwards to serve the loft conversion. This can be avoided, however, if part of an existing bedroom is used to accommodate the staircase instead, as shown in the diagram.
- A dormer on the front roof of a house will usually have a very marked impact on its surroundings and can easily spoil the character not only of the house itself but also of the street as a whole. For this reason dormers on the front roof are best avoided and roof lights used instead.



EXISTING FIRST FLOOR



PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR

☐ Appearance

- Make sure the dormer is not out of proportion to the overall area of the roof.
- Try to leave some of the existing roof below and to the side of the dormer.
- Try to keep the top of the dormer below the existing roof line. (If it goes above the roof line, planning permission will be required, as explained in Leaflet No. H1.)
- Clad the sides of the dormer in materials which match the existing roof.

☐ Privacy

- Make sure the dormer is so positioned within the area of the roof that any windows are set well in from party boundaries.
- Make sure that any windows in the dormer look out directly into your own garden and not into those of your neighbours.

What about planning permission?

You won't need to obtain planning permission from the Council for your loft conversion if it qualifies as "permitted development". You can check whether this is so by consulting Leaflet No. H1 "Permitted Development (Domestic)".

However, even if your proposal doesn't require permission, the Council would wish you to give consideration to the position and appearance of any roof dormers and their effect on the privacy of neighbouring properties, as set out in this leaflet.

It is these same factors which the Council itself will be concerned with in those cases where planning permission is required.

Where a proposed loft conversion requires planning permission, the Council normally consults adjoining occupiers. However, even if your conversion doesn't require permission, it's still a good idea to advise your immediate neighbours of your intentions.

For further information contact the Development Control Service of the Department of Planning and Building Control.

For information regarding Building Regulation Applications, telephone 020 8379 3624