

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL  
SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

# **HOUSEHOLDER'S GUIDE TO EXTENSION DESIGN**

**SEPTEMBER 2008**

**Exeter City Council's 'Householder's Guide to Extension Design' was adopted as a formal supplementary planning document (SPD) at the Council's Executive on 16 September 2008**

# Contents

## Foreword

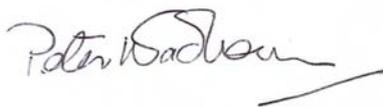
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 General Principles	3
Chapter 2 Rear Extensions and Conservatories	6
Chapter 3 Side Extensions	9
Chapter 4 Roof Extensions and Alterations	11
Chapter 5 Detached Garages and Outbuildings	14
Appendix - Other Issues	16



## Foreword

Householder's planning applications make up about 40% of all planning applications dealt with by Exeter City Council. Because of this our planning officers have a major responsibility to ensure that all proposals do not have an adverse affect on neighbours and that through good design the impact on Exeter's townscape remains positive.

This guide sets out in a clear and structured way the principles for your planning application to be successful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Peter R Wadham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Councillor Peter R Wadham  
Portfolio Holder of Sustainable Development and Transport



# Introduction

## ■ Status and Purpose

This guide is one of a series of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) that form part of the Local Development Framework of Exeter. It identifies Exeter City Council's requirements in relation to domestic extensions and alterations. The SPD amplifies local plan policies DG1 and DG4 (see below) and forms the basis for the City Council's determination of planning applications.

Extensions, individually and cumulatively, have a major impact upon townscape and amenity. No proposal is too small to have an impact and the City Council requires all applications to achieve high standards of design and amenity. Applicants are advised to appoint an architect or other appropriately qualified professional to carry out the design work.

## ■ Local Plan Policies

**DG1:** Development should:

- a) Be compatible with the urban structure of the city, connecting effectively with existing routes and spaces and putting people before traffic;
- b) Ensure that the pattern of street blocks, plots and their buildings (the grain of development) promotes the urban character of Exeter;
- c) Fully integrate landscape design into the proposal and ensure that schemes are integrated into the existing landscape of the city including its three-dimensional shape, natural features and ecology;
- d) Be at a density which promotes Exeter's urban character and which supports urban services;
- e) Contribute to the provision of a compatible mix of uses which work together to create vital and viable places;
- f) Be of a height which is appropriate to the surrounding townscape and ensure that the height of constituent parts of buildings relate well to adjoining buildings, spaces and to human scale;
- g) Ensure that the volume and shape (the massing) of structures relates well to the character and appearance of the adjoining buildings and the surrounding townscape;
- h) Ensure that all designs promote local distinctiveness and contribute positively to the visual richness and amenity of the townscape;

i) Use materials which relate well to the palette of materials in the locality and which reinforce local distinctiveness.

**DG4:** Residential development should:

- a) Be at the maximum feasible density taking into account site constraints and impact on the local area;
- b) Ensure a quality of amenity which allows residents to feel at ease within their homes and gardens;
- c) Ensure that the boundaries of private rear gardens facing public places are designed to make a positive contribution to the townscape;
- d) Where front gardens are included provide enclosure to create defensible space.

## ■ Permitted Development

This guide deals with developments that require planning permission only. There are some minor developments that do not require planning permission. These are known as permitted development (PD). Householders should complete a Householder Enquiry Form to confirm whether a proposal is PD or not. The form is available from the City Council's Customer Service Centre or from the Council's website - [www.exeter.gov.uk/planning](http://www.exeter.gov.uk/planning). Further information about PD rights can be found on the Office of Public Sector Information website [www.opsi.gov.uk](http://www.opsi.gov.uk).

# Chapter 1

## General Principles

## 1.1 Introduction

This guide aims to raise the standard of 'everyday' proposals. There is, therefore, a presumption that extensions should harmonise with or where possible enhance the character of the original house (Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1

All extensions will be required to comply with the following general principles 1-12. Further specific advice relating to particular kinds of extensions can be found in separate chapters. Planning applications which follow the principles outlined will normally be successful and minimise the time taken to achieve consent.

## 1.2 Site Appraisal

The guide is not exhaustive and every site is different. Therefore it is important to appraise the site thoroughly in order to produce an appropriate design solution. Some sites will need specific solutions to suit the site circumstances, which may not comply with certain principles. Where the site appraisal suggests a proposal which does not comply with this guidance, a full explanation of the design approach will need to be given in a design and access statement.

Each application will be considered on its own merits. Existing extensions should not be taken as precedents for new proposals.

## 1.3 General Principles

### Principle 1 - Use

Extensions to the main house should not be designed or used as separate residential units or businesses.

### Principle 2 - Street Scene

Extensions should respect existing building lines, the pattern of buildings in the street and the spaces between them. Extensions should not project forward of the front main building line nor cause terracing\* or contribute to creating terracing.

\*Terracing refers to two storey side extensions which result in an unacceptable reduction in width or total loss of the gap between properties to create the impression of a continuous building frontage (Figure 1.2).



Figure 1.2

### Principle 3 - Natural Light and Outlook

Extensions should not adversely affect the natural light and outlook enjoyed by neighbours.

### Principle 4 - Privacy

Extensions should be designed to minimise overlooking neighbouring properties.

### Principle 5 - Scale and Massing

Extensions should be subservient\* to the original house (Figure 1.3).

\*Subservience means that the size and proportion of an extension allows the main house to remain the dominant feature.



Figure 1.3

### Principle 6 - Roofs

Roofs should match the main roof in terms of shape and pitch. The ridges or the top roof lines should be set below and the eaves should be no higher than those of the main roof (Figure 1.4).

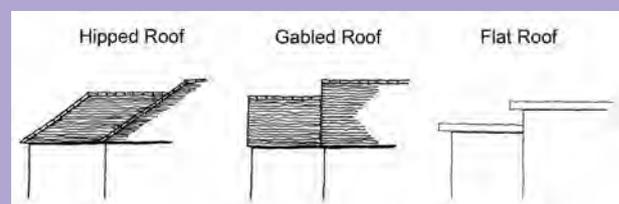


Figure 1.4

**Principle 7 – Architectural Details**

Architectural details of the main building should be protected and repeated in the extension design (Figure 1.5).



Figure 1.5

**Principle 8 - Materials**

External materials, and the way they are used (e.g. coursing and pointing), should match the original house.

**Principle 9 - Garden Space**

Proposals should ensure that 55 sqm of private usable garden space\* remains after construction. Where gardens are currently less than 55 sqm an extension may not be permitted.

*\* Usable garden space is land under the exclusive control of the occupier and within the curtilage of the dwelling house. It only includes land that has been adequately screened, usually to the rear and side of the property, and excludes driveways.*

*(N.B. Exeter Local Plan states that usable private garden spaces should not normally be smaller than 55 sqm)*

**Principle 10 - Integrated Design**

All elements of the proposal including landscape, bin and bicycle storage and security should be considered and designed as part of the overall scheme from the outset.

**Principle 11 – Landscape**

Extensions should be designed to minimise the impact upon existing soft and hard landscape.

**Principle 12 - Security**

The security of the extended and adjoining properties should not be prejudiced by the design of extensions. Security measures should not harm the established character of the street and the original house.

**1.4 Contemporary Design**

Where a contemporary design is proposed, an application should be accompanied by a design statement justifying the approach taken and how the design, notwithstanding its contemporary approach, complies with the principles of townscape and amenity. The quality of the design is paramount to the success of such extensions.

**1.5 External Works**

Works such as pergolas, decking, patios, boundary walls or fences may require planning consent. Proposals will be assessed having regard to natural light, overlooking and visual impact.

Micro-renewables such as solar and photovoltaic panels, micro-wind turbines, heat pumps, biomass technology and other similar devices may require planning permission to install.

Consult the City Council before commencing any work to ascertain whether planning permission is needed, and for general design advice.

**1.6 Crime Prevention**

It is important to consider at an early stage the impact the proposal may have on the security of the original house and the neighbouring properties. Security measures should be unobtrusive and designed as an integral part of the overall proposal. Opportunities to break in, such as drainpipes and flat roofs providing easy access to first floor windows should be avoided. Front doors should be clearly visible from the street to prevent potential intruders being hidden from view.

Security advice can be sought from Devon and Cornwall Constabulary on their website [www.devon-cornwall.police.uk](http://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk) or telephone 08452 777444.

**1.7 Seeking Advice**

The City Council offers pre-application advice to all householders considering extending or altering their properties. The aim is to allow planning officers to identify problems and suggest changes that will increase the likelihood of approval. The more information that is provided, the more specific the advice will be.

Contact details can be found on the back cover of this document.

- Notes

## Chapter 2

# Rear Extensions and Conservatories

*Note: This chapter should be read in conjunction with Chapter 1 General Principles.*

2.1 Depth

Extensions should be in proportion with the original building and should avoid blocking natural light and outlook to neighbouring properties. The following limits ensure the above requirements will be met.

**Terraced and Semi-detached Houses - 3.0m maximum** (Figure 2.1)

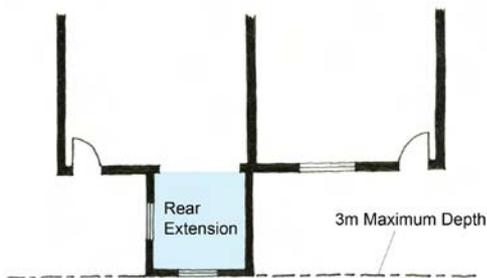
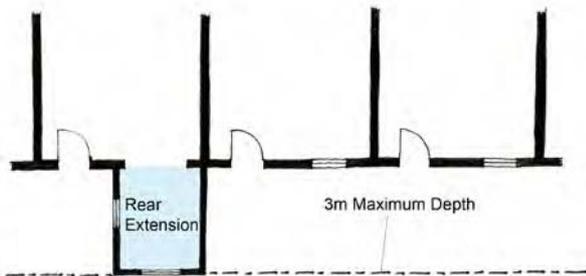


Figure 2.1

**Detached Houses – 3.5m maximum** (Figure 2.2)

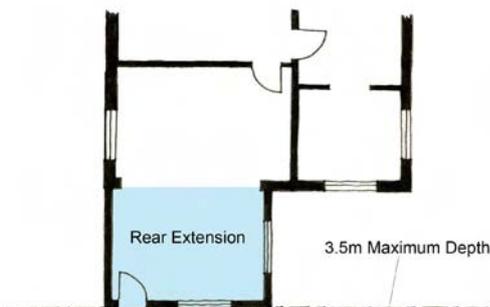


Figure 2.2

Measurements should be taken from the main rear wall of the original house. If in doubt about how to measure, contact the City Council for advice.

Two storey and first floor rear extensions are more likely to have an impact on neighbours than single-storey ones in terms of natural light, outlook and amenity. Therefore in addition to the depth limits, the commonly adopted “45 Degrees Rule” is used to assess proposals of this kind as indicated in the diagrams below:

*(N.B. The 45 Degrees Rule is in accordance with the recommendation of Building Research Establishment documents.)*

1. Draw lines at 45 degrees from the centre of the nearest ground floor habitable room\* windows of adjoining properties on an accurate, scaled **plan** and ensure that the plan fits within the area between the lines and the house (Figure 2.3).

2. Draw lines at 45 degrees from the centre of the nearest ground floor habitable room\* windows of adjoining properties on an accurate, scaled **elevation** and ensure that the elevation fits within the space made by the lines (Figure 2.3).

\* Habitable rooms include all living rooms, bedrooms and kitchens, but exclude bathrooms, WCs or circulation space.

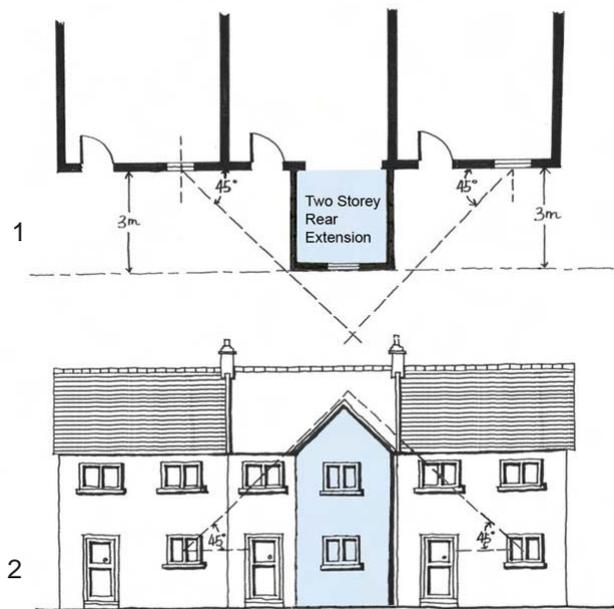


Figure 2.3

In case of two storey extensions, neighbouring properties should be clearly shown on both plan and elevation drawings, showing the position and size of the nearest windows in relation to the proposed extension. Applications cannot be registered without this information.

## ■ 2.2 Width

Extensions should not normally exceed two thirds the width of the original house to ensure they are subservient and in keeping with the character of the house (Figure 2.4).

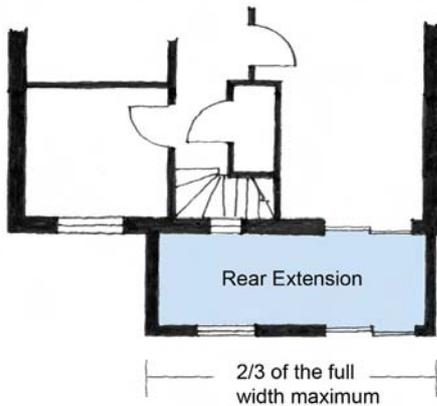


Figure 2.4

## ■ 2.3 Privacy

Windows should not be placed on side walls overlooking neighbouring properties. High level, non-opening windows with obscure glass may be an acceptable solution in certain circumstances.

With regard to two storey and first floor extensions, proposals should ensure that a minimum back to back distance of 22m is retained in order to preserve privacy (Figure 2.5). Where the existing back to back distance is less than 22m, an extension may not be acceptable.

*(N.B. Exeter Local Plan states that a minimum distance of 22m between rear habitable rooms should be maintained.)*

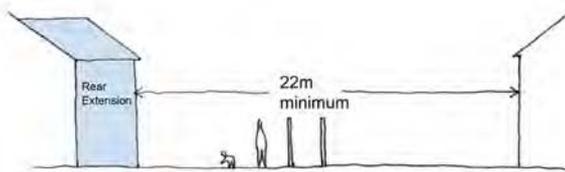


Figure 2.5

In cases of single storey extensions, the 22m rule may be applied where overlooking clearly occurs, for example where there is a change in level.

The use of a flat roof as a balcony or roof terrace over a single storey rear extension is likely to harm the privacy of neighbours and is not acceptable.

## ■ 2.4 Roof Height

For single storey rear extensions there should be a gap of at least 150mm (about 2 brick courses) between the highest part of the roof of the extension and the cills of first floor windows above (Figure 2.6). This is visually pleasing and helps to preserve the character of the original house.



Figure 2.6

## ■ 2.5 Conservatories

The criteria for single storey extensions apply to conservatories. The design may need to include solid walls or fixed obscure glazing to prevent overlooking.

- Notes

# Chapter 3

## Side Extensions

*Note: This chapter should be read in conjunction with **Chapter 1 General Principles**.*

This chapter applies to both single and multi-storey side extensions and also to first floor side extensions over an existing structure such as a garage or carport.

The guidance in this chapter in conjunction with general principles will ensure that proposals preserve the character of the original house and the established street scene and protect the amenity of the neighbours.

### ■ 3.1 Position

Extensions should be set back at least 900mm from the front main wall to ensure that the extension will be subservient to the original house (Figure 3.1). This arrangement also helps to preserve the established character of the street.

*(N.B. 900mm is in accordance with brickwork dimensions.)*

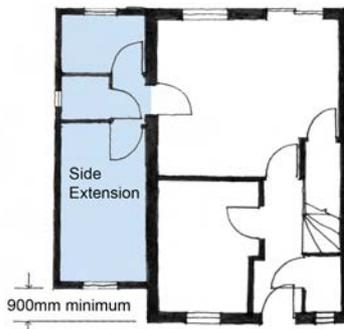


Figure 3.1

Single storey side extensions beyond the rear main wall should comply with the guidance with regard to depth for rear extensions outlined in Chapter 2.

Extensions of two storey or higher projecting beyond the rear main wall will not normally be permitted owing to the harm they may cause to the character of the main house, to the established townscape and to the neighbouring residential amenity.

### ■ 3.2 Proportion

To ensure an extension is subservient and is of visually pleasing proportions, it should be no more than half the width of the original house (Figure 3.2). Side walls should remain parallel to the original house to ensure the established character of the street and the original house is maintained (Figure 3.3).

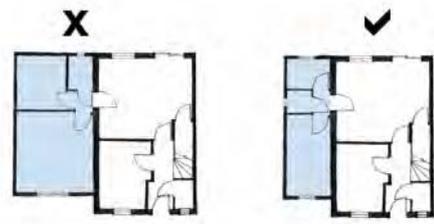


Figure 3.2

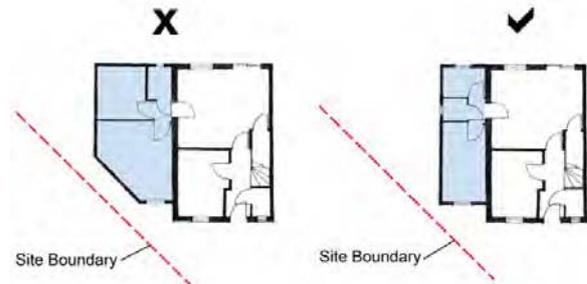


Figure 3.3

### ■ 3.3 Garages and Carports

The criteria for side extensions apply to garages and carports. A 'lean-to' will often be the best solution unless the original house is of a flat-roofed design. A lean-to roof may be hipped or vertical as suggested in figure 3.4.

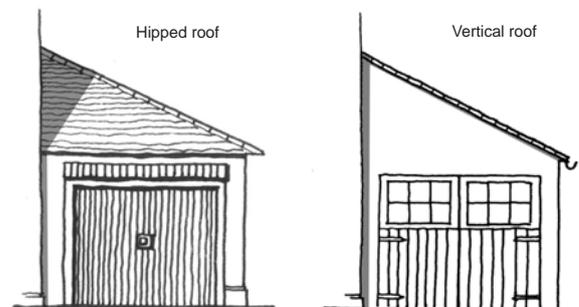


Figure 3.4

Garage doors can have a major impact on the established character of the original house and the street scene. Vertical timber doors are the most appropriate design solution across a range of architectural styles.

## Chapter 4

# Roof Extensions and Alterations

*Note: This chapter should be read in conjunction with Chapter 1 General Principles.*

This chapter deals with roof extensions and alterations, including dormer windows and changes to the shape of roofs.

Where established townscape, either at the front or the rear, is mainly without dormer windows, proposals for dormers will not normally be acceptable. However, where dormers have become established townscape, there may be greater scope for them.

If a dormer window is required to provide headroom rather than just natural light for the proposed accommodation, a proposal is unlikely to be acceptable.

■ 4.1 Position

Dormer windows should either be located centrally/symmetrically on the roof or be aligned with the windows below (Figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1

Dormers should be set a minimum of 0.5m (measured vertically) below the ridge level, 1m above eaves and 1m from the boundary. For gabled roofs, dormers should be set in a minimum 1m from the edge of the roof (Figure 4.2).

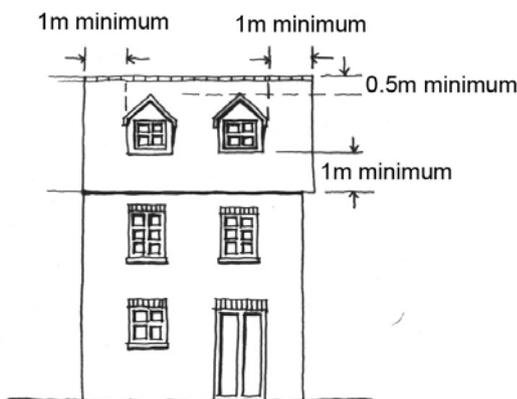


Figure 4.2

For hipped roofs, extensions should not come within 0.5m of the hip tiles (Figure 4.3).

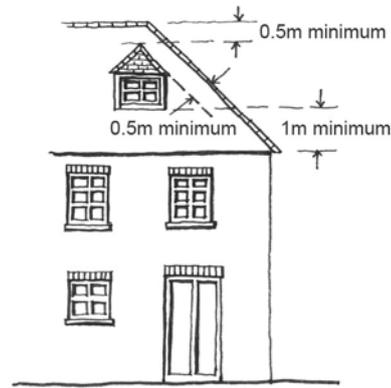


Figure 4.3

■ 4.2 Size and Scale

The size of dormers should be kept to a minimum so that the main roof of the house remains the dominant feature.

The windows should be clearly smaller than the habitable room windows on the main walls of the house so that scale and proportions are visually pleasing (Figure 4.4).



Figure 4.4

■ 4.3 Design Details

A range of designs of dormer roofs may be acceptable (Figure 4.5). The appropriate design solution should be based on the character of the original house and the street scene. Dormer cheeks should generally be clad in materials to match or complement the main roof.



Figure 4.5

#### ■ 4.4 Privacy

Where a dormer window increases the potential for overlooking of neighbouring properties planning permission will not normally be granted.

Roof extensions or alterations to include a balcony or roof terrace will not be acceptable where they are likely to overlook neighbouring properties.

#### ■ 4.5 Alteration to the Roof Shape

Proposals for altering the shape of roofs (e.g. from hipped roof to gabled roof) will not be acceptable due to its detrimental impact on the streetscene (Figure 4.6).



*Figure 4.6*

- Notes

## Chapter 5

# Detached Garages and Outbuildings

*Note: This chapter should be read in conjunction with **Chapter 1 General Principles**.*

## ■ 5.1 Location

Detached garages and outbuildings should be set back at least 1m from the front main wall of the house to preserve the character of the street (Figure 5.1).

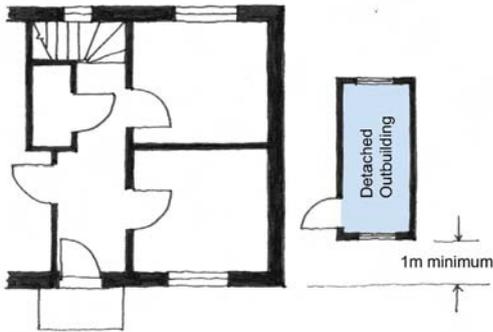


Figure 5.1

## ■ 5.2 Design Details

Detached garages and outbuildings should be confined to single-storey so they are clearly subservient to the original house. A garage or outbuilding may not be acceptable where changes in level result in walls significantly higher than normal domestic single storey height.

Double garages should be accessed by two separate doors divided by a pier (Figure 5.2). Garage doors can have a major impact on the established character of the original house and the street scene. Vertical timber doors are the most appropriate design solution across a range of architectural styles.



Figure 5.2

The width of driveways should be kept to a minimum to reduce the impact on the street scene and should be surfaced in materials which complement the house and its garden. Enclosure to the street should be maintained by walls, railings, gates and/or planting (Figure 5.3).



Figure 5.3 The design of detached garages and drives should respect the local street scene.

# Appendix

## Other Issues

## ■ Other Issues

### • Planning Submission Requirements

Planning applications are made by submitting forms, specified scale plans and drawings, any other supporting information and documentation necessary to process the application, and a fee. Details of these requirements may be found at [www.exeter.gov.uk/planning](http://www.exeter.gov.uk/planning).

### • Consulting Neighbours

Applicants are advised to talk to neighbours before submitting a planning application. Consulting neighbours at an early stage can save time and expense later on by avoiding the need to have plans revised.

### • Site Boundaries

No part of the extension including rainwater goods, foundations, canopies and overhangs should extend beyond site boundaries (Figure A1).

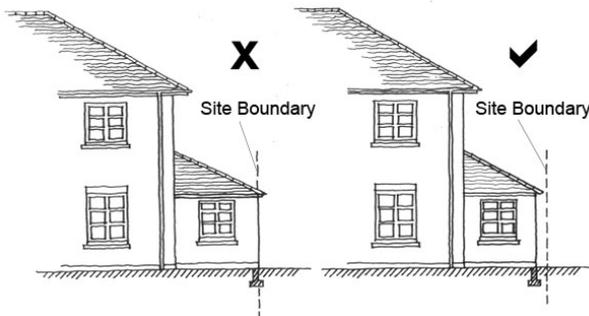


Figure A1

### • Changing Proposals

A new application is likely to be required for changes to an approved design in terms of dimensions, external appearance or materials. All possible steps should be taken to avoid changes to the design of an extension during construction. It is advisable to seek building regulations approval at the same time as applying for planning permission.

### • Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings

Contact the City Council's Conservation Planner (Tel: 01392 265232 or [planning@exeter.gov.uk](mailto:planning@exeter.gov.uk)) to ascertain whether there are any particular conservation area requirements with regard to a proposal. All extensions to listed buildings require 'Listed Building Consent'.

### • Archaeology

On very rare occasions development can affect archaeological sites. A separate consent is required for this and for ground works within central Exeter. Ground works in other historic areas can also occasionally affect buried remains. Please see the City Council's guidance on Archaeology and Development which is available from the City Council's Customer Service Centre or from the website - [www.exeter.gov.uk/planning](http://www.exeter.gov.uk/planning).

### • Trees

Important trees need to be protected during construction. The Council has produced the following documents to assist householders and developers to successfully retain trees: Trees and development (A Householder's Guide) and Trees in Relation to Development (Supplementary Planning Guidance). These documents are available from the City Council's Customer Service Centre or from the Council's website - [www.exeter.gov.uk/planning](http://www.exeter.gov.uk/planning).

Trees within conservation areas, and trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders cannot be felled or pruned without the consent of the Local Planning Authority. Prior to the design stage, contact the City Council's Landscape and Tree Officer (Tel 01392 265228 or [planning@exeter.gov.uk](mailto:planning@exeter.gov.uk)) to ascertain if any trees within or adjacent to the site are protected.

### • Sustainability

Extensions can provide the opportunity to improve a dwelling's environmental performance by applying energy conservation and water recycling technologies and by including green roofs and green walls where appropriate. Please consult the City Council for further information

### • Guidelines for building work

Applicants should seek consent from Devon County Council to store materials and equipment on the highway. Please call 0845 1551004 for further information.

### • Flood Risk

Extensions within a zone of medium-high flood risk will require Flood Risk Assessments. For further information contact the Environment Agency on 0845 9881188 or visit [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

### • Underground Services

Applicants should consult the relevant bodies to avoid building too close to or over underground services such as water, gas and electricity.

**This document is available in large print. Please contact Planning Services on 01392 265223 or email [planning@exeter.gov.uk](mailto:planning@exeter.gov.uk)**



## **Exeter City Council**

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