



Elmbridge

Borough Council

... bridging the communities ...

extensions
alterations
garden materials
high quality design
residential amenity
renewable energy
detailing local character
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Design and Character Supplementary Planning Document
Companion Guide : **Home Extensions**

April 2012

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1 Home Extensions

1.1 A companion to the Elmbridge Design and Character SPD, this guide is for people who wish to extend or improve their home and offers practical advice on how to achieve high quality design and preserve the amenities of neighbours.

Introduction

1.2 This guide is intended to give general advice and set out design principles that will ensure your extension is sympathetic to the original house, is in keeping with the character of the local area and preserves the amenities of your neighbours. An extension that follows this guidance is more likely to be granted planning permission. As such, the guide is a material consideration when deciding planning applications for extensions and alterations.

1.3 Good design does not necessarily add to the cost of a proposed extension. In some cases, the best design and use of the sustainable materials may increase initial costs but will be paid back in reduced maintenance and increased resale value of your house.

1.4 The principles contained in this guidance are relevant whether planning permission is required or not. You should follow them in all cases in order to achieve the most appropriate way of extending or altering your home. You can find a visual guide and more information on whether planning permission is required for your home extension or alteration by visiting the planning portal ⁽¹⁾

1.5 Permitted development rights extend only to houses and not to flats. In addition, it may be that permitted development rights have been removed by a condition on a planning permission, perhaps when the original house was built as part of a housing estate. You can contact Planning Services to check whether this is the case.

1.6 Accurate plans are essential before commencing work even if planning permission is not required. Though not essential in every case, employing a suitably qualified professional person to draw up your plans can ensure the project runs smoothly and avoids unnecessary delay. Should your extension need planning permission, a validation checklist is available on our website that explains all the information you need to provide with the application. You should consult your neighbours at an early stage so that you can design an extension that preserves their residential amenities and to avoid misunderstandings once the planning application has been submitted.

1.7 You can get informal advice in person from a Planning Officer as to whether your extension accords with this guidance by visiting the Town Planning reception between 10am and 4pm, Monday to Friday. You are advised to bring any plans, sketches or photographs that will give the officer as much information as possible. No appointment is necessary.

1.8 For properties within designated conservation areas, additional guidance is contained in a separate leaflet: 'Conservation Areas', with advice on extending or altering your home. You can find out if your home is within a conservation area by visiting our website.

1.9 Many home improvements relate to making the home greener and more energy efficient. Renewable energy technologies like solar panels, wind turbines, and biomass heaters are becoming increasingly popular. These are effective alternatives to fossil fuels and will help you to meet your own energy requirements and reduce your home's carbon dioxide emissions. For further advice with regard to sustainable design solutions please see section 5 of the main document.

General Principles

1.10 It is important in the design of an extension to achieve an appropriate relationship with the existing house, and to

harmonise with the streetscape. It should not dominate or overwhelm the existing or neighbouring properties. Similar detailing and materials to the existing house should normally be used. During the community workshops held to develop the Design and Character SPD, local people identified certain types of householder extension, such as over-sized dormer windows and poorly designed additions, as areas for concern that can detract from the character of a neighbourhood.

1.11 Single or two-storey side extensions should either be fully integrated with the house or clearly be shown to be extensions. The fully integrated extension is usually only successful where it does not affect symmetry. This is possible on a detached house or occasionally on the end of a terrace. On a house which is symmetrical or semi-detached, an extension which is subordinate to the existing building is advisable. In such cases it is preferable to set it back from the front wall of the house, which helps to reflect the secondary role of the extension and can also stop any awkward bonding of brickwork appearing on the front elevation.

1.12 Consideration should be given to existing proportions and, in particular, to the relationship of walls to openings such as windows and doors and the shape of those openings. The vertical or horizontal emphasis of the house should be repeated on the extension. Windows should always be of the same style as the original and new lintels and sills should line up with the existing. The only exception to this would be where there is a significant change in levels across a site.



- Unsightly extension, ignores style and character of original house, would adversely affect the appearance of the street scene
- Flat roof clashes with existing pitched roof and gable
- Clumsy junction between roofs
- Inappropriate windows differ in shape, alignment and materials



- New extension harmonises with original appearance of house and is not detrimental to the street scene
- Pitched roof compatible with existing
- Roof and ridge tiles match existing
- Eaves line up with existing
- Style and proportions of new windows match existing
- Windows line through with existing
- Extension set back from main wall
- Materials and detailing match existing house

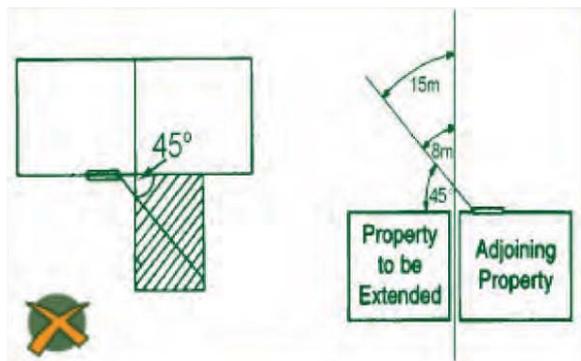
1.13 The roof of an extension should be similar to that of the existing house, in scale, design and the angle of the pitch. In particular, houses with a pitched roof should not have flat roofed extensions. The eaves level of a two storey extension should preferably line through from the house, and should not be higher than on the existing house.

1.14 Where a glazed conservatory is proposed, care should be taken to match its style to that of the existing dwelling, and to site it so as to avoid overlooking adjacent properties or light spillage from internal lighting.

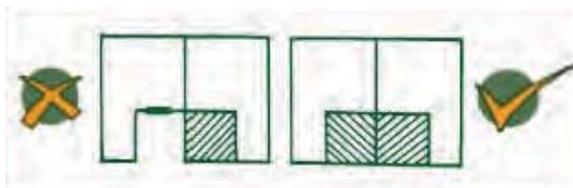
Daylight and Sunlight

1.15 Extensions to the house can cause loss of daylight and sunlight to the windows of adjoining house(s). Each application is treated on its own merits but experience has shown that if a single storey extension does not project more than 3 metres rearwards, the effect on natural light is minimal. Beyond that distance the extension should be less than an angle of 45° from the edge of the nearest adjoining neighbour's window.

1.16 The '45° angle' test applies to two storey extensions which are closer than 15 metres measured along that sight line from the neighbour's window, or 8 metres in the case of single storey extensions unless the latter do not project more than 3 metres. The loss of light to an adjoining dwelling can be more noticeable where an extension is to be directly to the south, warranting sensitivity in siting and design. Two storey rear extensions must be very carefully sited and designed. Their acceptability will depend on the specific characteristics of the site and their relationship to adjoining houses. The test should also apply to side facing windows of adjacent houses which serve habitable rooms, particularly if these windows are the only natural light source to the room.



1.17 You should also bear in mind that any extension in these circumstances will probably take away light from your existing rooms as well as those of your neighbour. However, this can be overcome by designing a scheme that involves extending both houses together.



Privacy

1.18 An extension should not result in any significant loss of privacy to adjoining houses and gardens. To prevent overlooking, windows should either be high level, obscurely glazed or omitted from any wall directly facing a neighbouring house or garden, particularly that part close to the house and having the most activity, e.g. patios. The use of a flat roof of an extension as a balcony or the creation of any other raised terrace will not usually be acceptable unless well screened or within substantial plots where overlooking would not occur.

Materials

1.19 The facing materials of any extension should ideally match as closely as possible those on the existing house. This is particularly important on pitched roofs. It may be possible to reuse some tiles from where the roof connection is made. Alternatively tiles could be removed from the back of the house to use at the front of the extension and then all new materials could be used at the rear.

1.20 With terraced or semi-detached houses you should avoid refacing the existing house to match the new materials of the extension. The use of different materials can often create visual disharmony within the streetscape.



Side extensions

1.21 Side extensions can sometimes lead to a terracing effect, especially where the fronts of the houses are a similar distance from the edge of the highway. To prevent this and in order to retain the rhythm and character of the street, the spaces between houses should never be infilled completely. A minimum of 1 metre should be maintained between any extension above ground floor level and the boundary. This will also have the benefit of leaving room for maintenance. Where space will allow and to accord with the rhythm of the streetscape, more than 1 metre should be left at the boundary, particularly in areas of low density characterised by a spacious layout where existing houses are sited a good distance from side boundaries. In such areas the minimum of one metre between boundaries and two storey extensions may be inadequate, and significantly more space should be provided to preserve the character of the area.

1.22 Single storey extensions can result in problems caused by the encroachment of foundations or guttering if the extension is too close to the boundary. A minimum of 300 mm between the side wall of a single storey extension and the property boundary should therefore be aimed for wherever possible.

Roof extensions & dormers

1.23 Roof extensions and dormers are often the most difficult to add successfully to a house. In particular they should not dominate the roof by being over large or higher than two or more sides of a hipped roof. Normally the main wall of the house should not be extended up to the dormer, i.e. some existing roof should remain beneath the new dormer. Where possible the dormer should follow the vertical lines of existing doors and windows. Dormer windows on the front roofslope of a house should be designed with care to preserve the character of the streetscape.



- An unsatisfactory dormer which is too large, projects above the ridge, is on a hipped roof and wraps around more than one face of the roof

1.24 Hipped roof or gable ended dormers are often preferable to those with flat roofs. Their sides should be covered in materials which match or complement the main roof. In some cases a roof light may form a more suitable alternative to a dormer.



- Satisfactory gable-ended dormers giving good visual unity by lining up with the existing windows

Garages and parking spaces

1.25 As with other extensions, a garage is usually better set back from the face of the existing house, especially if it is to be attached. The siting of large garages in front of houses in particular should normally be avoided. Where appropriate a garage should follow the same roof shape and be constructed in the same materials as the existing building. Existing parking spaces should not normally be lost as a result of extending a dwelling. If loss is inevitable, it

may be acceptable if alternative provision is made or if the resulting parking space or spaces are sufficient. Where front garden areas are used for parking, it is important to maintain a balance between hard and soft surfaces and ensure porous materials are used.

Gardens

1.26 The surroundings of houses are as much a part of the character of the residential neighbourhoods as the buildings themselves. Gardens should not be reduced to such an extent that they are out of scale with the house and the character of the area. Adequate amenity space must be retained for current and future occupants of the house. Normally the Council will expect the minimum length of a private garden for a house to be 11 metres. Exceptions may be considered in town and village centres. Normally a greater distance of 15 metres will be expected for larger family dwellings. Extensions should not infringe or reduce this and retention of an adequate width of garden will be required.

Planting/landscaping

1.27 Side boundaries to gardens are frequently lined with trees and shrubs which are attractive in themselves and enhance privacy. When extensions are to be built it is important to keep as much of the existing planting as possible, and it will often be necessary to protect root systems during construction. In the interest of providing adequate screening, additional landscaping may also be required to soften the impact of the new building and help integrate it into its setting. It will usually be necessary to site extensions to maintain an adequate distance from side boundaries to provide space for the retention of existing planting and allow for new planting. Indicative planting should be shown on application drawings.

Remember

1. Do not let the extension dominate.
2. Make the extension belong to the house.
3. Continue existing details into the extension.
4. Keep the same horizontal and vertical emphasis.
5. Make sure windows match.
6. Always use similar materials to the house.
7. Always consider:
 - a) what would be my first impression if I was buying the house with this extension, and
 - b) what would the extension look like from my neighbour's property?