

APPENDIX 1

WIRRAL METROPLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE HOUSE EXTENSIONS

This is one of a series of Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes amplifying Development Plan proposals in a concise format. The guidelines which follow have been prepared and adopted by Wirral Borough Council to inform prospective house owners, builders and agents about issues relating to house extensions, and to encourage a better standard of design. If you have any queries, a planning officer will be pleased to discuss your proposals before you make an application. You may also wish to talk to your neighbours to let them know what you are proposing to do.

The Unitary Development Plan stresses that generally house extensions will be permitted, providing the scale of the extension is appropriate to the size of the plot; the extension does not dominate the existing building and is not so extensive as to be un-neighbourly. Particular regard should be made to considering the effect on light to neighbours' habitable rooms and not to result in significant overlooking of neighbouring residential property.

There are a number of detailed issues that need to be taken into account in designing domestic extensions. Listed buildings and older properties in conservation areas usually require special consideration, and specific advice can be given on request by the planning department.

General Principles Your House and Garden

- It is always important to consider the specific character of the building to be extended and to take account of the context of the property. Extensions should reflect the existing dwelling and should retain the character, scale, design and materials of the original property with existing details such as window shape and design repeated where possible, and where appropriate similar material used.
- The size and scale of the resulting extension should not over-dominate the existing dwelling.
- Within the Green Belt any extension should not be disproportionate to the size of the original dwelling. Extensions should not exceed 50% of the habitable floor space of the original dwelling. Extensions and buildings erected within the garden of properties in the Green Belt *should not have a harmful visual impact on their surroundings*.
- In order to be in keeping, the roof of the proposed extension should reflect that of the existing dwelling in terms of the pitch, angles and materials used. A lower ridge line will often allow the extension to remain in scale with the existing.
- Extensions should not result in the loss of parking spaces if this would result in road safety or congestion problems. A minimum of one car parking space will be required clear of the highway. In order to reduce on street parking, parking may be acceptable in the front garden but only *where this would not have an adverse impact*

on the character of the area or where sufficient landscaping remains to soften the visual impact of the development.

- Garages and carports should have a driveway at least 5 metres clear of the highway. If the garden is not deep enough to provide a 5 metre driveway the garage must be set back from the main front wall to provide this minimum driveway length.
- If there are trees within or adjacent to the property they should be given careful consideration and every effort should be made to retain them. Guidance can be obtained from the Supplementary Planning Guidance note “Trees and Development” available from the planning department.

Your House and Your Neighbour’s House

- Your extension should not result in a significant loss of privacy, daylight or sunlight to neighbouring properties, nor be visually overbearing or dominant when viewed from adjoining houses.
- Where two habitable rooms to *principal elevations* face one another such that direct overlooking is likely to occur, the windows shall be a minimum of 21 metres apart. *The definition of habitable room includes lounges, living rooms, studies and bedrooms. A bathroom or landing would not be considered as a habitable room. Where a sole window to a main habitable room faces a blank wall they must be* minimum of 14 metres apart. This is a minimum distance and greater distances will be required where there are differences in land levels or where development adjoins that of different ridge and / or eaves height, for example, two storey development adjacent to single storey development or three storey development adjacent to the two storey development. In these cases an increased separation distance will be required so that for every metre difference in ridge height (or part there of) the distances in the standard shall be increased by 2 metres.
- The use of side windows in extensions adjacent to boundaries should be avoided *where these would result in significant overlooking.*
- Overlooking can often be reduced through the use of screen walls or fences at ground floor level, obscure glazing to windows which are not to main habitable rooms and doors, or the installation of high level windows (minimum height 1.7).
- Balconies *will not be acceptable where they would* increase overlooking into neighbour’s properties to an unacceptable degree and create a feeling of being overlooked from a higher level.
- Extensions built close to the boundary with a neighbouring property may have an adverse impact on the enjoyment of that property. Extensions should not be so large as to create an effect of over-dominance or cause a significant amount of visual intrusion, or *significantly* affect existing levels of daylight or sunlight.
- In considering extensions regard should be paid to site layout and levels of daylight. Extensions should comply with the 45 degree test *where appropriate.* (diagram for explanation)

Detailed Guidance Two Storey Side Extensions

Where the property stands in a line of detached / semi-detached dwellings and the extension would fill in the gap *between the original side wall of the house and the boundary*, there is a risk that the extension will create a terraced appearance *or will*

appear out of scale with the original dwelling. This is not in the interests of maintaining the character of the street, and, in the interests of visual

amenity should be avoided. In order to maintain a visual break *and to ensure the extension respects the character and scale of the original house*, the following criteria should be met:-

- The extension should be set back from the front of the dwelling by 1 metre and should have a lower ridge height;
- To allow for maintenance and access it is recommended that a distance of 1 metre be left between the extension and the side boundary.

Corner plots

Great care is needed in the design of extensions on corner plots. Such plots often provide an open appearance and greenery, and are prominent from both streets. The following criteria for corner plots should be met:-

- The width of the extension should not be more than half the width of the original frontage of the property;
- The width of the extension should not be more than half the width of the side garden / plot between the property and adjacent highway.

Rear Extensions

Rear extensions, including conservatories, should not dominate nor significantly alter the existing levels of sunlight, privacy and daylight to adjoining properties. In situations where properties are relatively close together; the following criteria for rear extensions should be met:-

- Two storey rear extensions should not be closer than 2.5 metres to a boundary that forms a party wall between terraced and semi-detached properties and 1 metre to other boundaries;
- Single storey rear extensions within 1 metre of the party boundary should not project more than 3 metres from the original rear wall of the property.

Front Extensions and Porches

Front extensions will clearly impact on the street and will rarely be acceptable on semi-detached properties, or detached properties in a row which are a similar design and appearance, properties that are prominent within the street scene or where there is a definite building line.

Front porches should be restricted in size and scale to the exterior door over which they are sited and should meet the following criteria:-

- Porches should not project forward more than one fifth of the front garden depth or 1.5 metre whichever is lesser;

- The design and materials should match the character and design of the original house;
- Porches should have a pitched roof where appropriate;
- Porches should not exceed the sill height of the first floor windows.

Dormer and Roof Extensions

Roof alterations and dormer window extensions can have a detrimental impact on the character of the area, and lead to a substantial loss of privacy and amenity to neighbours.

Dormer extensions should be sensitively designed so as to have appropriate visual impact on the appearance of the property or the character of the surrounding area. Proposals that unacceptably dominate the existing building or appear obtrusive in the street scene will not be allowed.

Dormers should not result in a significant increase in the amount of overlooking of neighbouring properties. Proposals resulting in a significantly adverse impact on existing levels of privacy will not be allowed.

Front dormers will not be allowed where they would have an adverse impact on the character of the street scene or on the appearance of the original dwelling.

Side dormers or proposals to create gable and roofs on one side of pairs of semi-detached and detached dwellings where both sides were originally hipped will not be allowed.

Dormer extensions *which are located at the rear of the property and would not appear obtrusive in the street scene* should satisfy the following criteria:-

- Dormers should be set in by at least 0.5 metres from the gable of the property and also from party boundaries;
- Dormers should be set back from the original rear wall by at least 0.5 metres and should be lower than the ridge height of the dwelling;
- Dormers should vertically correspond with existing windows and should match their style and proportions. The design should complement the existing materials.
- In cases of a rear dormer on a house with a hipped roof, the dormer shall not extend beyond the roof plane of the hip.

The 45 degree rule usually involves drawing a line from the mid-point of the sill of a window which is potentially affected by a neighbour's extension, at an angle of 45 degree towards the extension. If the proposed extension crosses that line it is unlikely to be acceptable. While there will be few grounds for exemption from the 45 degree rule where semi-detached or terraced houses are involved, where an extension is sited well forward of the affected window, and this would allow more light to reach it, the 45 degree rule may be relaxed a little.

