

ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO DWELLINGS



Policy H12 of the Borough of Darlington Local Plan, sets out the matters the Council will take into account in determining planning applications for extensions to existing dwellings. These guidelines provide more detailed guidance to householders and developers and aim to encourage good design in householder developments.

*Department of Development and
Environment, Planning Services Team*

Other Guidance Notes in this series:-

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2. *What happens to a Planning Application?*
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ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO DWELLINGS

When is permission necessary?

Planning, "A Guide for Householders," (published by the Dept. of the Environment, Transport and the Regions), describes the usual circumstances in which planning permission for householder development is not required. However, the legislation is complicated, and the public are strongly urged to complete the House Extension Enquiry Form, and/or discuss their proposals with staff of the Planning Services Team at the earliest possible time. In addition, the Planning Services staff can also give advice on the need for Listed Building Consent, and Conservation Area Consent (for demolition). A separate consent is usually required under the Building Regulations (matters of public health and safety in construction). In this instance the Building Control Officers of the Department will be pleased to help. Any associated removal or lopping of trees may also require the Council's consent.

THE MAIN CONSIDERATIONS IN GRANTING PLANNING PERMISSION

In looking at planning applications for alterations and extensions to dwellings the Council will take into account the wish of an occupier to improve living standards or meet changing family requirements without having to move house. But the Council must also consider the need to maintain the character of the locality and protect the amenities of neighbours.

Therefore, the Council will be likely to look favourably upon proposals which:

- (a) are in keeping with the character, design and external materials of the existing property;
- (b) harmonise with adjacent properties and fit into the existing street scene;
- (c) do not significantly reduce the amount of daylight/direct sunlight entering the principal rooms of adjacent dwellings;
- (d) do not significantly affect privacy in the rooms and gardens of neighbouring properties; and
- (e) are not overbearing when viewed from neighbouring properties.

Sites vary enormously and identical alterations and extensions proposed for two similar house types may not both be granted permission. This may be due to the presence of different external factors, such as the relationship to neighbouring properties, differences in ground level and orientation.

REAR EXTENSIONS - DAYLIGHT, OUTLOOK AND PRIVACY

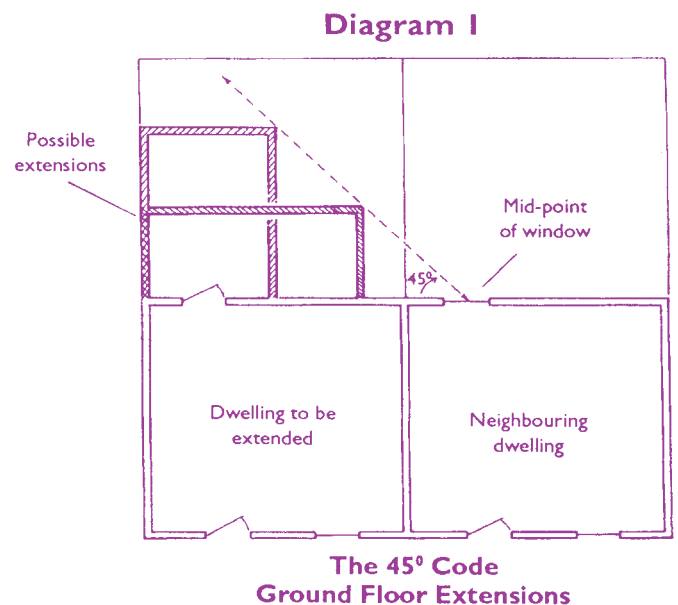
Single-storey extensions

Where dwellings are detached, the length of the extension along, or parallel with, a neighbour's boundary is not always critical; often there will be an existing 2 metre high fence or hedge that softens its impact, or there is good separation between the properties.

Where the impact is not modified in such a way, a measure of the effect on daylight and the outlook from the neighbouring dwelling is the "45° Code" whereby a line is projected at 45° from the mid-point of the nearest window of the neighbouring dwelling (excluding bathroom/w.c. windows or similar). If the proposed extension crosses that line, its impact may be unacceptable (diagram 1) and the length of the extension must be reduced, or it must be moved away from the boundary.

Dwellings that adjoin are more likely to be adversely affected by extensions,

and the advantage of the 45° Code is that it is sensitive to the relationship of the properties and to the precise position of the extension relative to the neighbour's windows.



However, there are circumstances in Darlington in which infringements of the code at ground floor level are difficult to avoid. In particular, in respect of **terraced properties** which have narrow frontages and small rear yards. In these cases, the benefits to all of providing enlarged kitchen or bathroom facilities at ground level will usually outweigh the disbenefits to individual neighbouring properties.

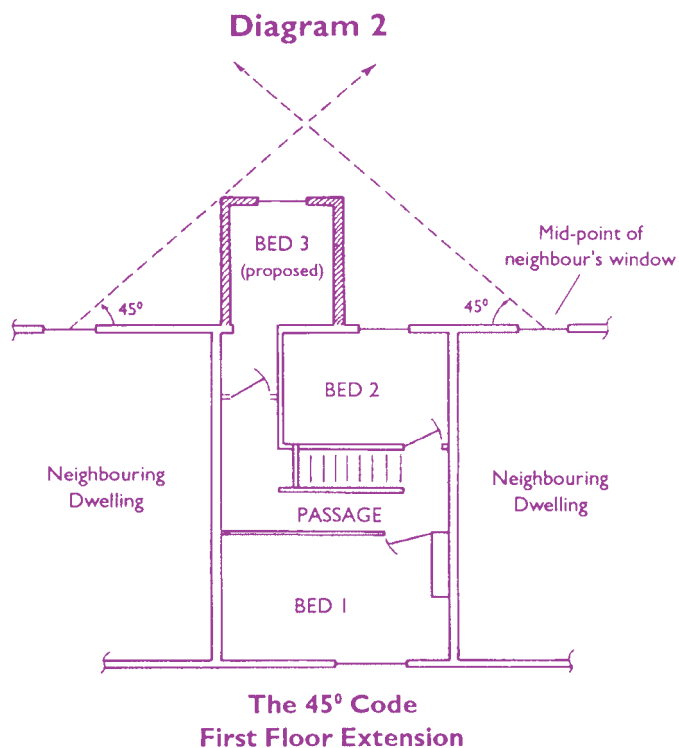
Greater length is often acceptable when adjoining houses are extended at the same time, (unless the extensions would occupy the full width of the yard or garden and impact upon another adjacent property), or where there are existing high boundary walls between the rear yards; (houses 1 and 2; diagram 3).

In all cases, it is important to retain an area of private garden or yard area. Therefore, extensions are not usually acceptable if they would occupy more than 50% of the existing rear garden or yard area.

First floor and two-storey extensions

In these cases, the 45° Code will be employed at both the nearest ground and first floor windows of the adjacent dwelling. This may mean that a proposed first floor extension cannot project as far as the ground floor extension that it is built upon.

Consequently, a first floor extension to a terraced property may be limited to quite a small room. An example of an acceptable extension, which has been built in Darlington, is shown in diagram 2.



Privacy

Windows that directly overlook, at close quarters, a neighbour's habitable room or a large area of previously secluded garden, should be avoided. Where it is not possible to omit a window, it may be necessary to use obscured glazing or a high level opening. A balcony on a flat-roofed extension is generally only acceptable on detached and isolated or well-screened properties, where there is no overlooking of adjacent dwellings and their gardens.

REAR EXTENSIONS - APPEARANCE

Permission is more likely to be granted if the proposal includes the features illustrated in diagram 3:

- a pitched roof: although more expensive to construct than a flat roof, it will require less maintenance and therefore be cheaper over

a number of years; and it may offer the further advantage of providing additional storage space;

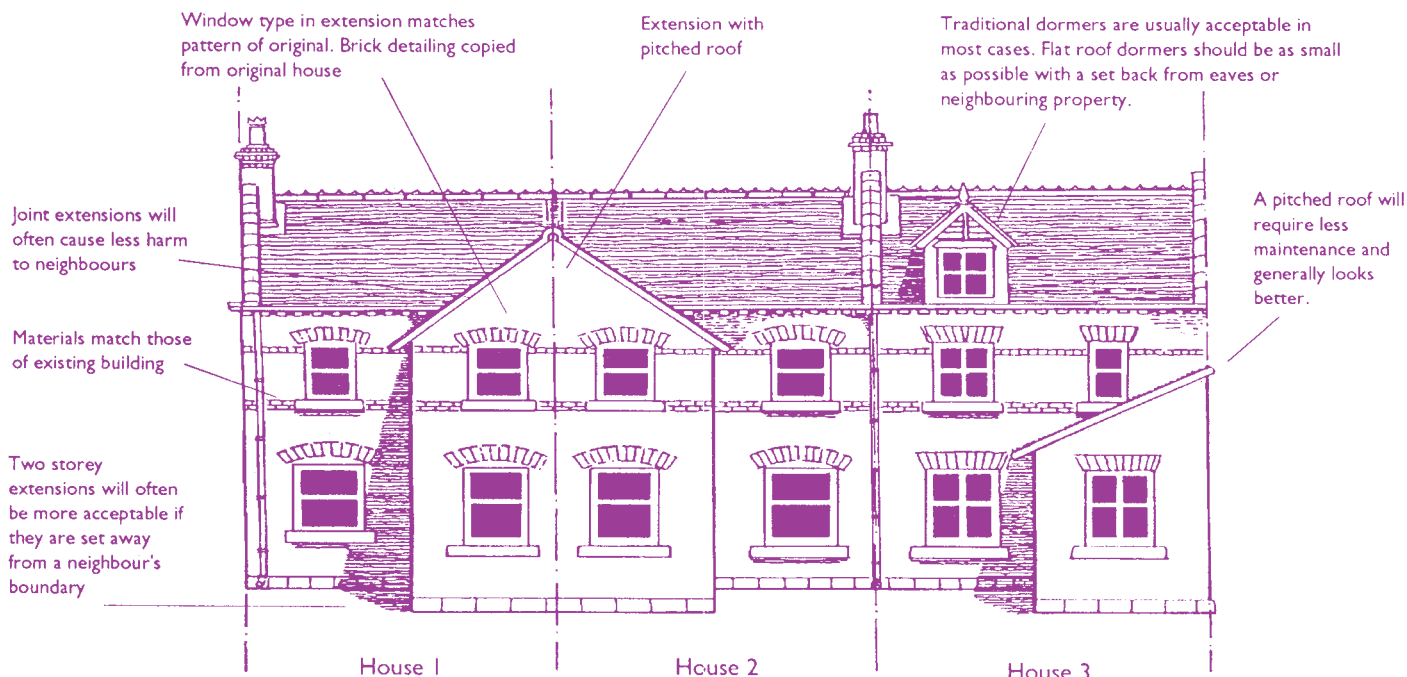
- external materials to match the existing dwelling; and
- windows of the same pattern, aligned with those in the existing dwelling.

SIDE EXTENSIONS

Detailing must be of a high standard, including materials that perfectly match the existing property. Pitched roofs are usually essential, (diagram 4).

A useful device is to set back a side extension from the existing front wall to reduce the contrast between old and new brickwork and reduce the apparent bulk of the extended property. A set-back of 1.0 metre or so is desirable.

Diagram 3



In confined spaces between properties, side extensions must not seriously reduce the daylight entering a neighbour's side windows, and the outlook from principal rooms. It may also be necessary to increase the set-back from the front wall of the existing house, to avoid creating an ungainly terraced effect in a street of otherwise well-spaced properties. Consideration must be given to the means of carrying out maintenance to flank walls when building up to the common boundary.

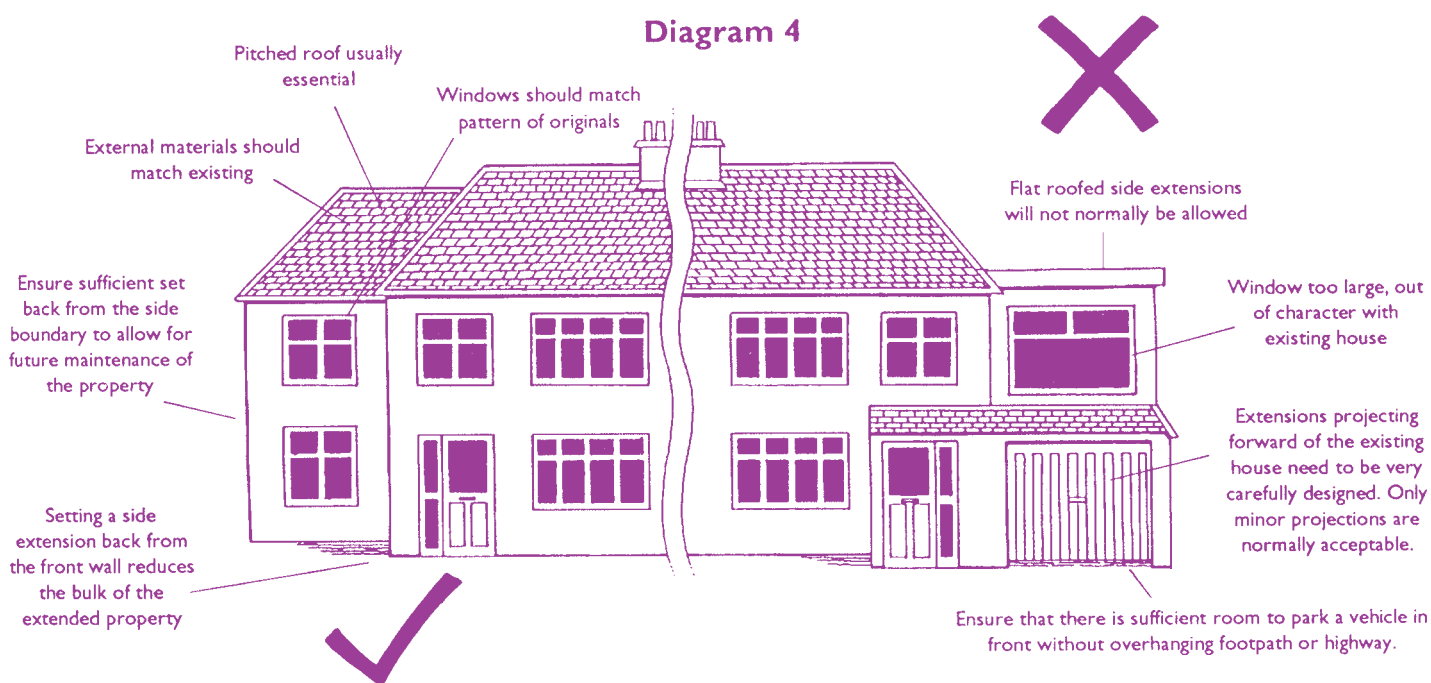
Garages and carports should follow the same basic rules as above, and the selection of materials to match the main dwelling is important. Garage doors are available in a wide variety of styles, and vertically panelled up-and-over doors are often more pleasing on older properties than horizontal panelling. The visual proportions of a double garage may be improved by splitting it into two openings with a dividing brick pillar.

be very carefully detailed to reflect the design and materials of the existing dwelling. Only shallow projections forward are likely to be acceptable in order to minimise the impact on the amenities of adjacent properties and the street scene.

WINDOWS AND DOORS

These are important features and should be in keeping with the overall age, style and character of the property. This does not rule out modern detail on an extension to an older property, but it is difficult to do well. The repair and re-use of existing features is often cheaper and more in keeping than their replacement.

In older houses windows generally have a vertical rather than a horizontal emphasis and the proportion of window to wall spaces imparts a solid look. Detail such as decorative arches and lintels, the means of opening (sash, top-hung, etc), and amount of inset



The development should retain a minimum drive length of 6m. between the garage doors and the site boundary, to allow a car to stand clear of the highway.

Likewise, the change of use of garages to living accommodation is undesirable, if it results in a reduction in the amount of off-street parking space below the required standard.

ROOF EXTENSIONS

These may be necessary to create room height, but are unlikely to be permitted on front elevations because of their size and disruptive appearance in the street. Rooflights or traditional dormer windows are more likely to be acceptable.

At the rear of a property, roof extensions may be of an acceptable appearance if they include the features highlighted in diagram 3. Roof lights, (which do not allow overlooking), are generally preferable. Roof extensions and dormers on bungalows sometimes lead to overlooking of neighbours' windows and gardens where none was previously possible, and this may not be acceptable.

FRONT EXTENSIONS AND PORCHES

Given the prominence of these features in the street, they must

from the face of the wall should be copied across to a new extension.

Similar care with new bay or bow windows will avoid them appearing as an incongruous afterthought.

LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

Applications for alterations and extensions to listed buildings and buildings in conservation areas will be examined rigorously to ensure that character is preserved. Special attention should be given to the choice of windows, doors, and the matching of external materials, and to fine detail such as string courses of brickwork, decorative ridge tiles, etc. In such sensitive areas professional advice should always be sought.

Should you wish to discuss any of the above points, please ring a Planning Officer on one of the following numbers:

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01325 388608 01325 388609

01325 388624

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