

## part 2 maintaining residential standards







# maintaining residential standards

## 2 MAINTAINING RESIDENTIAL STANDARDS

### 2.1 Achieving good design

**2.1.1 Developers and home owners should seek advice from the City Council - the Local Planning Authority on any proposals for new housing development, extensions or modifications to existing housing.**

2.1.2 This part of the Residential Design Guide focuses on detailed guidance for new housing development and for home owners wishing to extend or modify their property. New housing, extensions and modifications will only be acceptable if the design is consistent with the main principles set out later in this guide.

2.1.3 One of the key objectives of this guide is to positively enhance local character; achieving this or other key objectives may mean that one or more of the principles may have to be compromised. As such, the use of these principles should be seen as a starting point for designs of quality and innovation to be developed, and developers will be expected to provide a written explanation for the reasons behind the decisions taken throughout the design process. Designs that do not fundamentally address the objectives behind these principles and are submitted without written justification are likely to be refused.

2.1.4 This guide advocates good design in all situations, irrespective of whether development requires planning permission or not. Amenity and privacy are important to ensure that people enjoy and feel comfortable in their own home, it is therefore necessary to ensure that any new development, extension or modification of a property should maintain the existing occupants' and future occupier's enjoyment of their home through access to natural light, outlook and privacy. A poorly designed extension will not only spoil the appearance of your home and street but can reduce its value and its attractiveness to potential buyers.

2.1.5 Advice on whether a planning application is required, preparing a planning application and whether pre-application meetings are required is given in Part 1.





*The two photos above show a new development of retirement apartments in Fareham the design of which responds to the local character by including similar features to existing development, such as bay windows and gable ends. The development also uses a similar coloured brick and mortar to existing development.*

**2.1.6 A character appraisal should be carried out of both the site and the local area.**

**2.1.7** It is good practice to carry out a character appraisal of the local area as this will help you make robust decisions. Although this is not practical on householder applications it will assist the smoothing running of the planning process if consideration is given to how the alterations and/or extension relates to the local character of the area. This will help ensure that your proposals do not make a negative impact on the local character of the area and will help you make a robust case for achieving planning approval. Advice on this is given in Appendix E.

**2.1.8 Key issues to be considered when you start developing your proposals are:**

- The effect of the development or extension on the appearance of your house and the character of the area. Is it going to be in keeping with the original house and the wider setting of the street and neighbourhood?
- The effect on neighbours' natural light, outlook and privacy;
- When extending your home, what will be the effect of daylight and sunlight to existing rooms - will they be less attractive and less useable than they are now?
- Will the extension make your garden too small or take away space around your home, e.g. space for parking your car?
- If the development is on a site boundary, how are you going to maintain it?
- If you are proposing to develop on or near the boundary, you must comply with the Party Wall etc. Act 1996. Further guidance on this is given in Appendix H;
- Discuss your ideas with your neighbours.

## 2.2 Access to natural light, outlook and privacy

**2.2.1 New housing development, extensions and modifications to existing homes should ensure that access to natural light, outlook and privacy is maintained for existing occupants and their neighbours in their homes and private gardens as well as for the intended occupants of new habitable rooms.**

2.2.2 To prevent over-development, loss of privacy and dominance over neighbouring houses and to secure a reasonable standard of amenity and outlook for all, it is important to leave an appropriate gap or space between neighbouring buildings and extensions. Proposals that cause a 'terracing' effect in streets of semi-detached and detached properties will be resisted. Spaces between buildings should ensure a reasonable outlook for occupants of lounges, dining rooms, kitchens and bedrooms. There should also be suitable access to rear gardens for storage of bins, bicycles and lawn mowers etc.

2.2.3 The best way of ensuring privacy between houses is to avoid windows to habitable rooms (living room, dining room, kitchen, bedroom) directly facing one another.

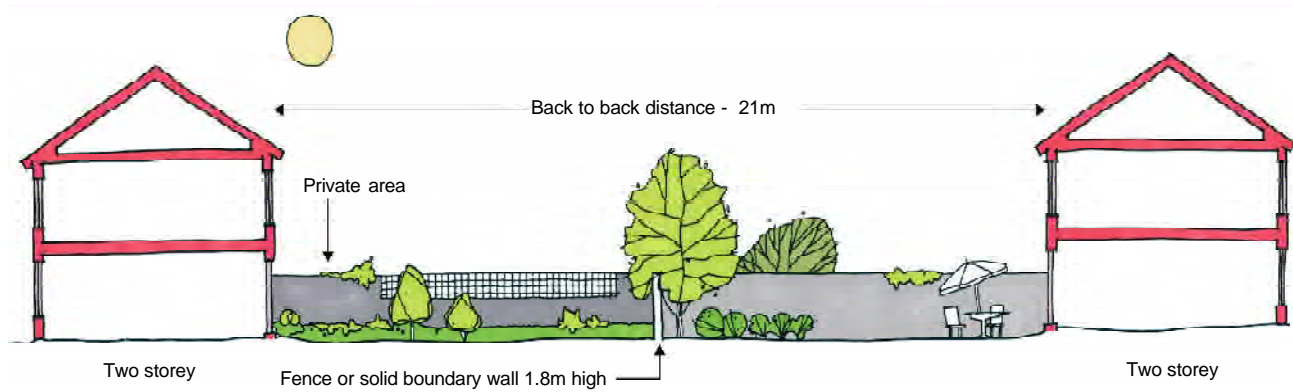
2.2.4 Where this cannot be achieved and habitable rooms face one another the following minimum back-to-back distance standards between windows should apply (see page 22 for explanatory illustrations):

- Between single and 2 storey housing and other similar housing = 21 metres
- Between 2/3 storey housing and other 3 storey housing = 28 metres
- Between 3/4 storey housing and other 4 storey housing = 35 metres

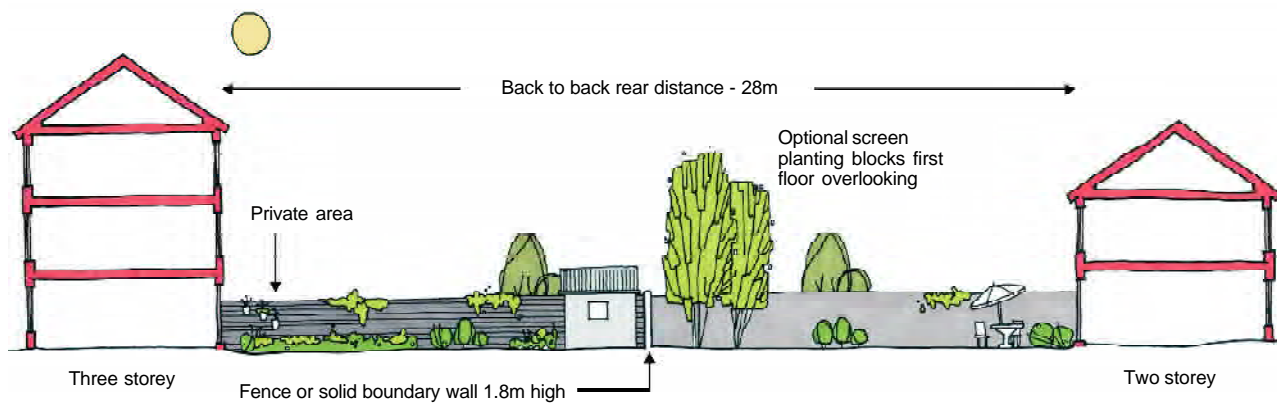
2.2.5 The City Council may apply the above standards more flexibly, depending on the context of the site e.g. in inner city locations where back-to-back distances are characteristically less than those detailed above, and providing that the developer puts forward a reasoned case for alternative back-to-back distances, supported by a character appraisal of the area.

2.2.6 Where there are differences in site levels between the site being developed and neighbouring land, the separation distance should be increased by 2m for every 1m rise in ground level between new and existing housing.

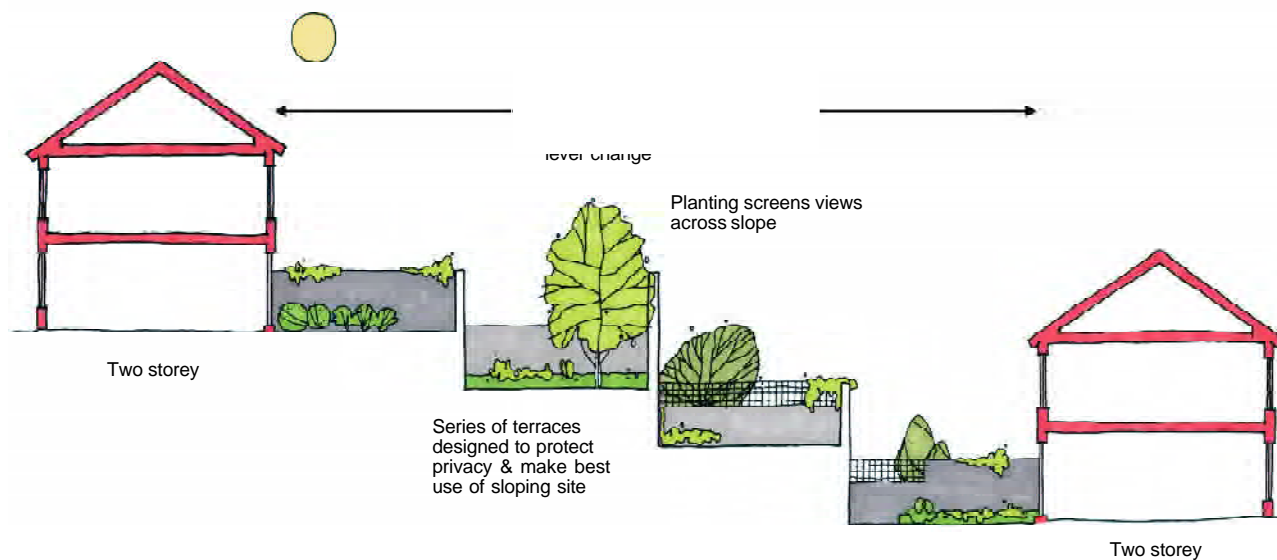
**Back to Back Privacy Distances: Two storey to two storey**



**Back to Back Privacy Distances: Three to two storey**



**Back to Back Privacy Distances: Sloping site with appropriate design**



**2.2.7** The separation distances between windows of habitable rooms and the side (gable end) wall of another house or building are:

- Single or 2 storey house to a side wall of a 2 storey building = 12.5 metres
- Single or 2 storey house to a side wall of a 3 storey building = 15 metres

**2.2.8** Where a side gable wall will be located on higher ground than a windowed rear wall, the separation distance should be increased by 1m for every 1m change in ground level.

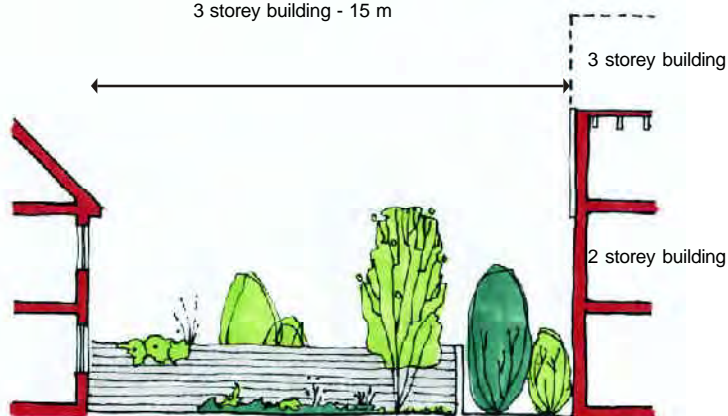
**2.2.9** Provision of obscure/fixed glazing, walls/fencing, mature tree planting and positioning of ancillary outbuildings as a means of mitigating intrusive, direct overlooking will be considered on their own individual merits. Landscape designs should prevent undue loss of light due to trees or high hedges. Guidance on how to deal with existing high hedges on neighbouring land and disputes arising from them is available from the Tree Team; see Appendix L for contact details and Appendix K for the legal definition of high hedges.

**2.2.10** The design, layout and detail of new housing development should also aim to minimise problems such as noise, fumes and vibration from neighbouring roads and sites that can spoil the enjoyment and privacy of housing and garden areas. In some circumstances, it may not be possible to create an acceptable living environment and proposals for new housing may then be resisted.

1 or 2 storey house to side wall of:

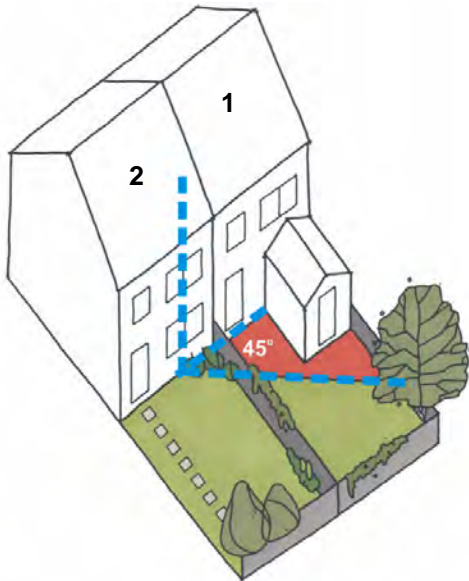
2 storey building - 12.5 m

3 storey building - 15 m



### Separation Distances between:

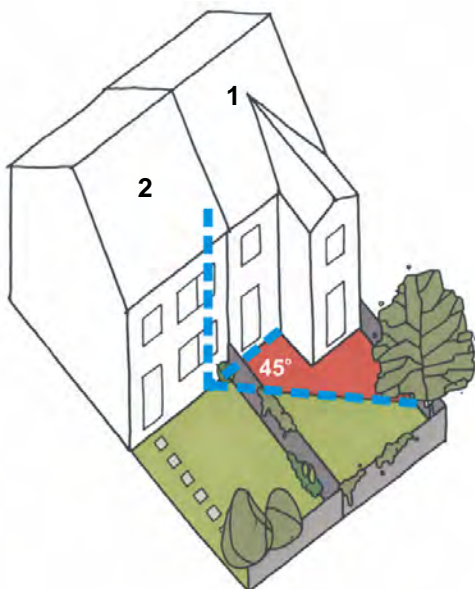
*Windows of habitable rooms to side wall of 2 or 3 storey building (shown with section through pitched roof at ridge)*



**Single storey extension  
(semi-detached and detached)**

1. **Applicant's House**
2. **Neighbour's House**

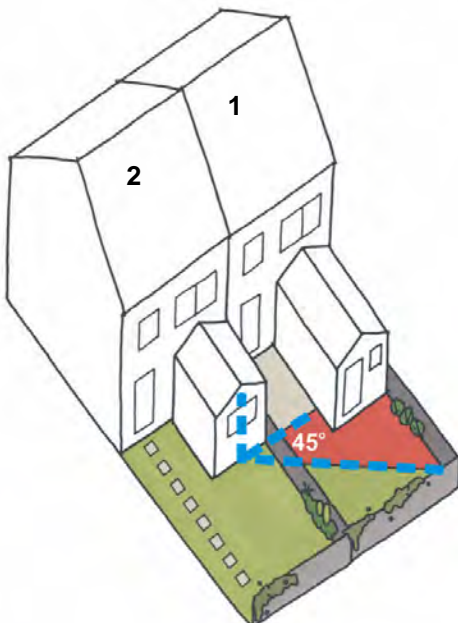
*Code applied from midpoint of nearest window of habitable room*



**Two storey extension  
(semi-detached or detached)**

1. **Applicant's House**
2. **Neighbour's House**

*Code applied from quarter-point of nearest window of habitable room*



**Single storey extension where neighbouring property has already been extended**

1. **Applicant's House**
2. **Neighbour's House**

*Code applied from midpoint of nearest window of habitable room*



**2.2.11 New housing development and extensions must comply with the '45 Degree Code'.**

**2.2.12** The 45 Degree Code is designed to protect your neighbour's enjoyment of their property by ensuring a satisfactory outlook, natural light and to prevent excessive overshadowing. Generally, the rule provides for an imaginary line drawn at 45 degrees from your extension to a neighbour's nearest window which lights a habitable room (living room, dining room, kitchen, bedroom). The line will show the maximum width and/or depth that a proposed extension can build up to and so extensions should not project beyond the projected line.

**2.2.13** In a situation where neighbouring houses are semi-detached or detached and for single storey extensions this line is drawn from the midpoint of the nearest window of a habitable room. For a two storey extension the impact is potentially much greater so the line is drawn from the quarter point of the nearest window of a habitable room. In a terraced situation with a single or two storey extension, the impact is again potentially greater so this line will be drawn from the nearest edge of the neighbour's window.

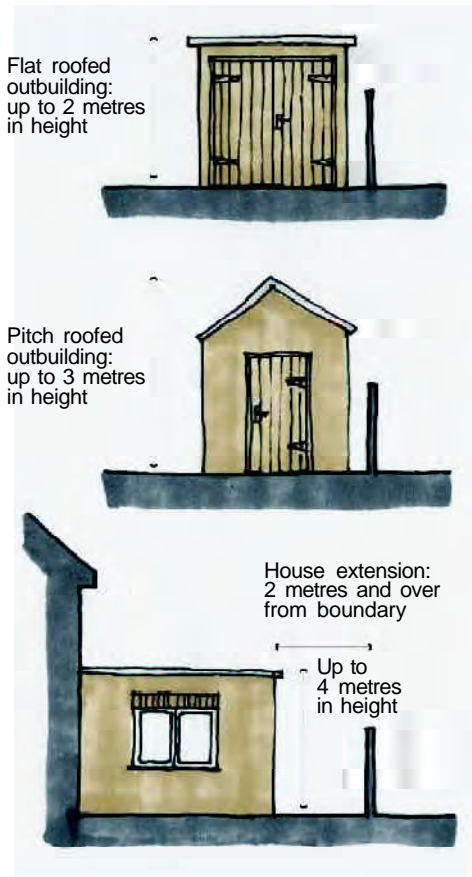
**2.2.14** Where a neighbour's extension has already been built or given planning permission that would break the Code, an extension will normally be allowed to the same depth on the boundary with that neighbour providing no other neighbour or the local character is adversely affected.

**2.2.15** Joint proposals for extensions to adjoining houses may be acceptable even if the individual extension would not comply with the Code. This is provided that neighbouring properties are not adversely affected and that the extensions are the same depth and are to be constructed and completed at the same time.

**2.2.16** The detailed design of a proposed extension could make it unacceptable even though it may comply with the Code. Similarly, constructional solutions that meet the Code may be unsatisfactory because they result in awkward and unusable space between a proposed extension and the site boundary. For example angled walls may only be acceptable where they form an integrated part of the overall design.

**2.2.17** Permanent structures between houses such as boundary walls, hedges or garages that affect the use of the Code may justify its relaxation.

**2.2.18** Where a new building is proposed on or close to the boundary of a garden/yard boundary, the City Council will carefully consider the impact of this from the perspective of someone standing in that location. The weight



Illustrations show extent of permitted development for outbuildings and extensions close to and on the boundary (see item 2.2.20)

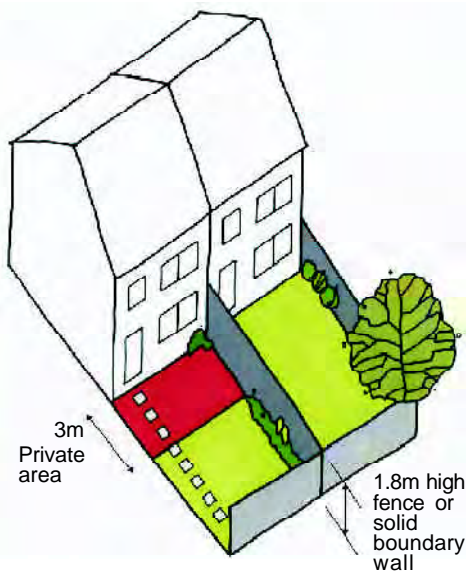


Illustration relating to item 2.2.23

attached to such a consideration will vary from site to site. Where the garden/amenity space is small, it could well be that the new structure will appear overbearing and dominate the outlook of the neighbour in an unacceptable way. Where the garden area is large and enjoys an outlook in a number of directions other than the land being developed, this consideration will be less important. For specific advice on the development of new dwellings on corner plots see Part 3.

**2.2.19** The orientation of the neighbour's land relative to where the development is to take place will also be important. If the development is located north of the neighbour, no harmful impact is likely to the amount of light the neighbour receives. The existing degree of enclosure to that garden or yard space will be taken into account in arriving at a decision about the acceptability of the new development.

**2.2.20** An outbuilding may be built in an adjoining garden on or close to the boundary. Where this is flat-roofed a structure 3m high above the highest garden level can be permitted development. In the case of a ridged roof structure, this height increases to 4m. In the case of house extensions; the height of new building work may be permitted development up to 4m above ground level and 2m or more from of a boundary.

**2.2.21** Notwithstanding the application of these permitted rights as a comparison or fallback position, the siting of structures above 4m in height close to or on the common boundary will be very carefully considered by the City Council. The objective will be to ensure that any neighbour will continue to enjoy a reasonable level of amenity.

**2.2.22 Rear boundary screening should be provided with new development and house extensions.**

**2.2.23** A 1.8 metre high screen should be provided between adjacent plots for a minimum distance of 3 metres from the back of the house or extension along the side boundary. This is to ensure that the most private space at the back of a dwelling is not overlooked in order to provide a private sitting out area (unless adequate walls, mature trees, hedging or fencing already exist).

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## 2.3 Detailed design of extensions and modifications

### 2.3.1 Extensions should be subordinate to the original dwelling.

2.3.2 All extensions should be smaller than the main part of the house and not dominate its appearance. Extensions that are too big can not only be oppressive for neighbours and make the house look lopsided or unbalanced but can also break the visual continuity of the street of which it is a part.

### 2.3.3 Extensions to the side of a house should avoid creating a terracing effect, in areas characterised by semi or detached housing.

2.3.4 In traditional detached and semi-detached housing areas the infilling of the spaces between houses can detract from the character and rhythm of the street. In such areas of housing a gap reflecting the prevailing urban grain must be retained between the extension and side boundary to ensure access to the rear of the property and for maintenance purposes. If the gap is required for access it should comfortably allow one to push a bicycle along from the side when walking and retrieve a wheelie bin or lawn mower stored in the back yard or garden.

2.3.5 Where building up to the boundary is unavoidable, then the front of the extension should be set back to a level in keeping with the character of the existing house and wider area. Extensions should not project the beyond the existing building line of the house (this does not include porches or bay windows).



*Extensions, such as this one, should not be approved as they constitute an unacceptable change to the character of the area*



- 2.3.6** Extensions to dwellings on corner plots should respect and enhance local character and existing building lines. For guidance on the development of new dwellings on corner plots see Part 3.
- 2.3.7** The design of extensions on corner plots requires careful consideration, as they tend to be visually prominent. This means that extensions built in line with the front of houses on one street can risk encroaching over the existing building line of the other.
- 2.3.8** The starting point for any proposal should be to respect established building lines and local character. In some circumstances a well-designed extension that does not follow established building lines might be permitted, for example where it can create visual interest and closure, hold the street together or create a pinch point to reduce traffic speeds. However, where the character of some corner plots adds value and amenity then careful consideration should be given to any redevelopment. For example, the orientation of dwellings on corner plots may allow a visual break in development that allows glimpses over rear gardens that can be seen from some distance along the street; the redevelopment of this plot might remove this view causing damage to the local character.
- 2.3.9** Extensions on corners will not be permitted where they damage the street scene.
- 2.3.10** The presence of existing substantial hedging, fencing, railings or highway verges will be taken into account in assessing proposals.
- 2.3.11** Garages and parking areas should not be accessed from corners or street junctions for reasons of highway safety.

Type of Property	Back Garden Depth/ Rear Garden Area
Terraced	10 m / 50 m <sup>2</sup>
Semi-detached	10 m / 70 m <sup>2</sup>
Detached	10 m / 90 m <sup>2</sup>
Flats and other developments with communal grounds	20 m <sup>2</sup> per unit
Sheltered accommodation	30 m <sup>2</sup> per unit

- 2.3.12** Extensions should leave adequate garden space for general use, daylight and outlook.
- 2.3.13** Extensions should maintain a garden area that allows for practical use and reflects the established character of the area and the size of the house.
- 2.3.14** Minimum garden sizes within suburban areas of Southampton are listed adjacent (these were established in the previous Development Control Brief and are based on common excepted practice). However, there are some parts of the city where gardens are typically smaller than those indicated on the left. In such cases it may be demonstrable that smaller garden sites are characteristic of the local area.

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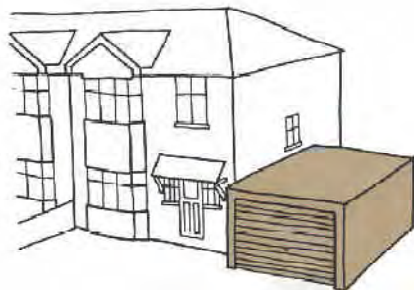
## 2.4 Garages and Parking Areas

**2.4.1 The size of garages, car ports and parking areas should be in proportion to the size of the house.**

**2.4.2** As with extensions, garages and parking areas should respect the scale, character and building materials of your house. In the majority of cases, garages at the side of a house should be set back from the main building line and a car space provided in front of the garage. Gates or garage doors must not project over the adjoining public highway when opened.

**2.4.3** Where new pedestrian or vehicular entrances are proposed along a front boundary to a house these should retain as much of the original walling, fencing or railings as practical to retain a sense of enclosure in the street scene, and act as a threshold between the public realm of the street and the private curtilage to the house.

**2.4.4** The replacement of traditional front gardens with open hard standing areas for parking often results in a poor visual appearance and in some cases localised flooding and will therefore be resisted, where the City Council has the ability to control such matters. Consideration should be given to the needs of disabled neighbours who may need more space to access car doors etc.



Bad - typical flat roof garage bearing no relation to the style & proportion of the original house

Good - A well designed garage, respecting the character of the house. The garage is set back giving better appearance



Good - An integrated garage design where the pitch of the roof reflects that of the existing house and integrates the extension by continuing the roof from the garage over the existing front door to provide a porch.

Roof tiles used should be of small scale and similar colour and material to the original roofing material of the house



*This carport has been sensitively designed using an extension of the main roof at the same pitch and with the same roof tiles*



*Front gardens, front and side boundary walls should not be removed and the garden paved over as this creates a negative impact on the existing character of the street*

## 2.5 Architectural Features and Detailing

- 2.5.1 Irrespective of the architectural style used in the design of your property there are a number of basic design principles that should be followed in the detailing of any extensions or modifications. Generally the architectural detailing and materials used should be in keeping with the original building. See Part 3 for further guidance on designing new housing.**

Basic design principles to be used are:

- 2.5.2 Roof form and pitch** - must relate to the original design of the building and existing roof and this usually means a pitched roof (hipped or gabled) set lower than the ridge of the main roof. A flat roofed extension of a similar storey height to the pitched roof of the original building will not be acceptable unless the extension is single storey and not visually prominent, as this will help to maintain a reasonable level of natural light to neighbouring habitable rooms.

The reconfiguring of roofs and their supporting structure to create additional accommodation in the roof space will not be acceptable if the changes adversely impact on the local character of the area.

Roof tiles or slates, ridge, hip, valley and ventilation tiles and or details, and valley details should be the same for extensions as for the original building and use the same sized, coloured and textured tiles or slates.

- 2.5.3 Windows and doors** – designed in a similar style to existing proportions, size and detailing. They should be arranged to line up vertically (openings centred one above the other) and horizontally (lintel and cill heights of openings set at a limited range of heights) with those of the original house.

- 2.5.4 Dormer Windows** - should be in keeping with the house, the roof form and in particular with the style of the windows used on the lower floors to give a sense of balance and proportion. Dormer windows should be kept below the ridge and away from the verges and eaves line of the roof. Traditional forms follow a classical architectural hierarchy where the proportions of the windows become smaller from the ground floor upwards.

The addition of dormers should not dominate visually the existing roof. As such, 'box' like additions that fundamentally change the overall shape of the roof creating a negative visual impact will not be acceptable.



*The removal of existing features, such as gabled roofs will be resisted. Roofs should be retiled with tiles of similar characteristics to the original ones*



*Dormer windows should not dominate the main roof form, nor should they be higher than the ridge of the main roof*



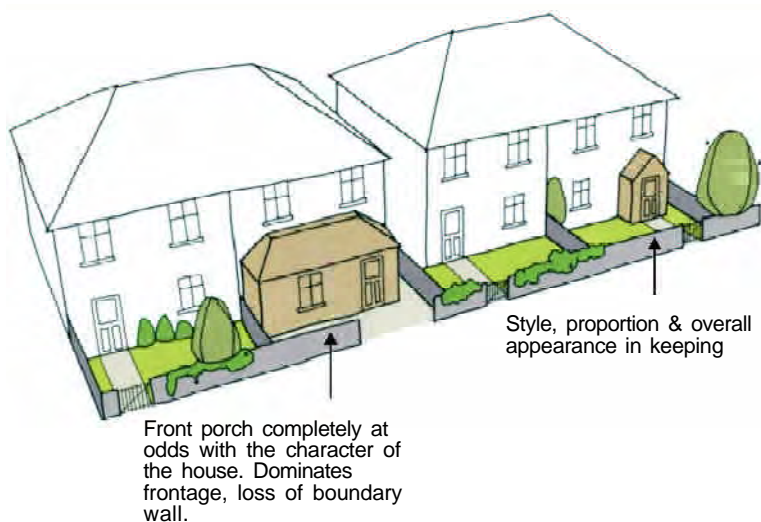
*Dormer windows in Brittany, France, use a simple construction allowing the sides to be glazed*



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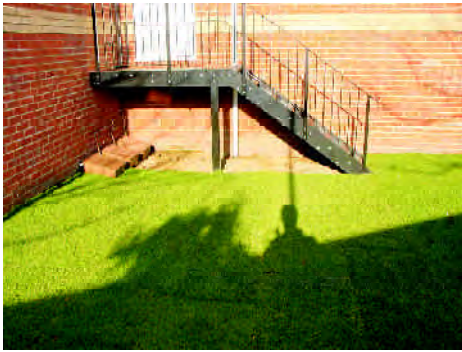
**2.5.5 Architectural detailing** - the detailing of existing brickwork should be the same for extensions as for the original building and use the same sized, coloured and textured brick (or if not available the nearest match available), the same type of brick bond, mortar colour, joint detail and thickness. String courses, lintels, cills, plinths, corbels, verge and eaves details and rainwater guttering and pipework, should be the same or similarly coloured and detailed materials or products and where relevant, should be carried through at the same height as the original building to the extension.

**2.5.6 Porches** - should be designed in the style of the house and neighbouring properties, respect the existing roof pitch/materials and not be so big as to dominate the front of the house. Care should be taken not to remove or hide significant architectural features.



**2.5.7 Balconies and terraces** – are encouraged, particularly in apartments but should be designed to avoid direct overlooking of neighbouring private residential spaces, both internal and external, and their provision and detailed design should not be detrimental to the local character of the area.





*The space below this staircase should have been finished with paving and the gas meter boxes cannot be easily accessed in this location*



*These plastic service pipes look unsightly and can easily be damaged on this access road*

**2.5.8 External staircases** – these may be required under the Building Regulations to provide an external means of escape to a building. They may also be provided as an amenity to provide access from a higher level balcony or terrace to a lower level one or to the ground e.g. a first floor roof terrace leading to a rear garden. As a means of escape an external staircase will be required to meet certain parameters, such as width, height and design of balustrading and may also be required to be partially covered. Care should be taken with the design of these structures as they can be visually imposing and provide spaces for people to gather and so should be designed to avoid direct overlooking of neighbouring private residential spaces, both internal and external, and their provision and detailed design should not be detrimental to the local character of the area.

**2.5.9 Services** - these should be positioned so they do not visually intrude and in locations where they are easy to access. Further guidance is given on this in Part 3.

## **2.6 Accessibility**

**2.6.1 New housing, extensions, modifications and their facilities should be accessible to all and an access statement should be submitted as part of the planning application.**

**2.6.2** New housing, extensions and modifications should comply with Part M of the Building Regulations, allowing safe and easy access for all on the approach to an into the dwelling. The Disability Discrimination Act also sets out requirements for new housing and these include that disabled persons should have an uninterrupted approach to the front door and that a level access into the house is provided within the main storey of the building. Although planning legislation cannot control interior access and facilities within the dwelling, it is best practice to consider these at planning stage as the Building Regulations do require that access is made easy to all habitable rooms and sanitary accommodation on the main floor and this may impact on the external design of the development.