

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Conservation pays

We expect a lot from the houses we live in. We want them to last, to look good, to express our personalities, to provide for or adapt to suit our changing needs, to be economical to maintain and to hold their value - quite a lot to expect of mere buildings.



This house retains all the character of its age. (Tooting)

Most of us strive to ensure that our homes and neighbourhoods provide the best possible environment. Unfortunately, objective and independent advice and information on how best to care for houses is not always readily available, and advice is often seen by manufacturers and suppliers as an aid to selling their products, regardless of the type, style, location or construction of a house. With this in mind, the advice and information contained in this guide is aimed at helping householders, whatever type or age of building they live in, to make informed decisions about regular maintenance, recognising and repairing defects, adapting, improving or extending their houses and about using resources. Conserving the fabric of a building and its appearance makes both economic and practical sense, as well as helping it to look its best. At the same time, it helps to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.

This guide contains general advice and describes actual techniques which may help homeowners who feel able to tackle some jobs themselves. However, building construction and maintenance are specialised subjects and often involve large sums of money. Professional advisers can help you get value for money by diagnosing defects and correctly repairing them, designing sympathetic new work, preparing drawings and specifications, obtaining statutory approvals, finding the right contractors or tradespeople, advising on priorities, and controlling the quality of the work.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

The Building, The Street, The Area

In most built-up areas like Wandsworth few domestic buildings are isolated individuals, even if they are detached, but are part of a street scene, often of houses of similar style and size, though not necessarily identical. So, altering the appearance, form or size of any one house can affect not only the house itself, but the whole street. Generally speaking, the more similar a house is to its neighbours, and the closer together they stand, the less tolerant they are of even minor change to the street appearance.



What can happen with misguided craving for individuality and alterations which don't even match each other



For example, a terrace of houses, which is in effect one long building with many doorways, will have its overall appearance spoilt if one part is roofed, painted, glazed or fenced differently from the other parts. The more haphazard changes occur within the group, the more it suffers as a whole, and the more groups or terraces affected, the more the whole street or neighbourhood suffers. We recognise this in, for example, a group of picturesque stone cottages or a grand Regency terrace, but it also applies to the simple brick or stucco-fronted terrace of almost any time or place.

The Government recognises that "Public opinion is now overwhelmingly in favour of conserving and enhancing the familiar and cherished local scene." This is something which can be achieved by local people themselves, and it is they who benefit from it.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Change and ageing of buildings

Most people in Wandsworth live in older houses in which several generations have lived before. Most of these older buildings have undergone numerous changes in their lives, as they have aged or decayed, been repaired or altered, or extended. Generally speaking, looking after the building is a matter of preventing or slowing down decay, ensuring that repairs are carried out correctly or remedying poor work, and avoiding alterations which harm the building's character or appearance. If the building has been altered badly, careful reinstatement may not be simple or 100% successful, but usually a great deal can be done to bring out its original appearance.

Decay occurs in all building materials as a natural process. It is the gradual, graceful decay of the surfaces of materials which gives old buildings their distinctive character, quite apart from the period or style of their architecture. The objective of conservation is **not** to make an old building appear new, remove or obscure existing work of quality, alter it back to some assumed earlier appearance, restyle or add superficial ornament, update it or make it look "different" in the false hope that it will look better. Any of these actions are likely to detract from its appearance, character, history and value.



It can be done! Derelict cottages brought back to life and beauty by comprehensive expert conservation. (Wandsworth)

Priorities

When considering repairs and other works to your house, choices frequently need to be made about what to do first, especially when budgets are limited. It is at this stage that professional advice can be most useful. Priority should be given to repairs to the building's fabric, especially any urgent structural work that may be needed, steps to prevent structural movement, "wind and weather-tight" repairs (e.g. roofing, gutters and downpipes, flashings, etc.), the elimination of all sources of water ingress/retention (e.g. rising and penetrating damp, poor pointing, cracked or broken cills, joinery defects, ensuring adequate ventilation of rooms, subfloors, roof spaces, etc.) and measures to deal with fungal decay, beetle attack, removal of defective material, and replacement of suspect plumbing and wiring etc. After these priorities any structural alterations or adaptations, repair/reinstatement of important architectural features, and other improvements, extensions and alterations can be considered.

DEALING WITH DEFECTS

Dampness

The old saying “look after the pennies, and the pounds will look after themselves”, is especially apt where buildings are concerned. Major building defects most often arise from neglect, lack of maintenance, poor or incorrect work, which would have cost comparatively little to put right.



Poor brick repair and loss of the rich cornice have disfigured this house. (Tooting)

The most common cause of defects and decay is water entry, leading to rot, spalling masonry, mould growth, salt penetration and ultimately structural failure. Therefore the first objective of economic care and conservation is to maintain the building in water-tight condition. Regular inspection and repair of roofs, rainwater or soil disposal systems can prevent very costly remedial work later. Other places where water can enter buildings are defective joints in brick and masonry and around window and door openings, through tops of mouldings, cornices, string courses etc., and around defective flashings. Any green algae or lichen on the surface of a building, often around a downpipe or moulding is a sure sign of leaking, dripping or splashing water. Such occurrences should be remedied without delay.

Rising damp is caused by lack of a damp proof course, its failure or bridging for example by a higher earth level, an adjoining wall, or render. Remedies can include insertion of a physical damp-proof course or a chemically injected damp barrier in the masonry and usually involve internal work. If your house had a damp proof course originally, check for the cause of failure and remedy it if possible.

DEALING WITH DEFECTS



Structural cracking from long term movement can still be repaired

Structural movement

Structural movement can be due to a variety of causes, including subsidence or the reverse, heave, movement in an adjoining building, failure of a structural member or long-term effects of weather. Most houses in London are built on shrinkable clay or other soils where some minimal movement is normal. If a building which has been stable for many years suddenly shows signs of movement, the cause should be investigated. However, there is seldom any need for emergency action. Monitoring should be carried out over a period of time to determine the direction, rate and cause of movement, and is generally a job for specialists. The Council's Building Control Division should be consulted on any sign of serious structural movement or potential failure.

Trees are often unjustifiably suspected of causing structural movement, and tree roots are cited as causing damage to drainage systems. Tree roots very seldom cause mechanical damage to drainage, although if drains are defective, the roots will be attracted to the additional source of water and nutrient. If a house is built on shrinkable sub-soil such as clay, a large tree near the house may absorb a great deal of water from the soil causing it to shrink, and the foundation to subside. The amount of water taken up by tree roots is a function of its "leaf area", therefore any threat may be reduced by such measures as thinning and crown reduction. The Council has published a Guide to the Care and Maintenance of Trees and a list of approved tree surgeons. Ground heave and structural cracking may result from felling a large tree near a building, since the water take-up will abruptly cease, and the resulting soil expansion can damage foundations.

DEALING WITH DEFECTS

Dampness – leading to decay, rot and failure of materials



Timber decay

Wet and dry rot fungi which can destroy timber require certain conditions in which to grow, principally moisture, darkness and moderate temperature. If these are denied, the fungi cannot develop. Ensuring adequate ventilation and avoiding leaks in the building fabric or plumbing are essential and low cost measures to prevent damage. Maintaining paint or other protection on external timber is equally important. Pests which eat timber are commonly the larvae of various species of beetle. Warning signs include small holes in the timber and powdery deposits.

Prevention and treatment for most types of dampness, timber decay or pest attack are available and specialist firms can usually inspect and report on premises free of charge, in expectation of carrying out any work. If in doubt however, independent advice should be sought. An aid to preventive maintenance is to develop a checklist for your particular property, with inspection intervals for each item related to a typical maintenance cycle, e.g. check gutters, downpipes and drains twice yearly, roofs, exterior decoration, gates and fences yearly, pointing and external plaster five-yearly etc.

BUILDING REPAIRS

Walls

As in London generally, most houses in Wandsworth are of brick construction, though there may be stone dressings or carving, cast stone elements, ornamental plasterwork, roughcast, slate or tile hanging, stucco or other techniques augmenting the basic construction. Generally, 19th century or earlier brick and masonry is built in lime mortar, Portland cement only coming into use for pointing, roughcast or render late in the century. This “soft” construction, compared to that used in new buildings, is why an old building can move to some degree with changes in soil conditions or for other reasons without cracking or structural instability, and why bricks from these buildings can often be salvaged for re-use. The intended appearance of the original wall finishes, including types of pointing, should not be changed unless there are compelling structural reasons. Purpose-made facing brick should not be covered with any other material such as artificial stone cladding or pebble dashing, which can seriously harm the appearance and structure of the building. Walls intended to be roughcast or rendered would reveal poor quality brick and jointing if stripped.

*A bad neighbour –
harmful stuck-on cladding – not now
permitted in conservation areas*



BUILDING REPAIRS

Brick Repair

Brick repairs should be carried out in a brick which matches the original wall in all respects. This is not always easy. Many old brick varieties were made with local clays no longer obtainable or only manufactured by specialist producers. Modern metric bricks are smaller than most old Imperial sizes and may not be suitable in texture or colour, as the old ones may have been handmade and fired differently. The most successful repairs may be achieved with matching bricks from a hidden part of the building itself, although historic fabric should not be lightly sacrificed. If this is not possible, the alternatives are :

- (a) a matching second-hand brick.
- (b) cutting out or taking down sections of defective walling and then reversing the face, so that the undamaged inner face is presented to the exterior - a measure to be considered only in cases of extensive damage to the wall.
- (c) a specially manufactured copy from suppliers who cater for this limited market.
- (d) "plastic" repair in a matching mortar, properly bonded to the defective brick after it has been cut back to sound material. This is not generally recommended for other than small areas where it is not desirable to disturb the surrounding brickwork. Correct colour, strength and texture must be obtained by experiment before proceeding.
- (e) insertion of slips, thin sections specially made or cut from whole bricks, after cutting back the faces of severely damaged bricks to sufficient depth - this is not easy to carry out satisfactorily and is a task for specialists.

Cracks in brickwork or other finishes can be repaired using grouting or bonding techniques; however professional advice should be sought on the cause of the crack and the appropriate repair method.

The brickwork in the lower half of this photo is new, carefully matched to the original



BUILDING REPAIRS



An unaltered group of cottage style houses, finished in unpainted rough-cast, but with a poorly matched repair

Special Bricks

Special bricks, such as those for gauged arches, mouldings, splays, bullnoses, glazed bricks, etc. may need to be manufactured to order. Special craft skills and mortars are used in the cutting and assembly of these features.

Other wall finishes

For plaster, stucco, terracotta, render or roughcast repair, the general principle is first to determine the composition of the original, then cut out the defective work and use a material which matches the original in strength and finish, ensuring it is properly bonded.

Mortar

Mortar used for brick repair should be weaker than the bricks themselves; a mix of 1 part portland cement, 3 parts lime, preferably made from lime putty and 12 parts sand is suitable in most circumstances for 19th century buildings but may need to vary with the age, type of brick, original bedding mortar and degree of exposure.

Pointing

Pointing mortar should be of no stronger mix than 1 cement, 1 lime and 6 sand, and colour, texture and type of joint are crucial to the success of the repair. Many buildings have been spoilt by non-matching pointing repairs or by the whole face being repointed unnecessarily and/or in an inappropriate manner. Incorrect pointing can not only harm appearance, it can accelerate decay and lead to major defects. It is especially important that pointing repair in terraced houses exactly matches the original, to maintain the unity of the group. Walls should be examined for evidence of good original pointing, to be used as a model for repair. Well bonded existing pointing should not be removed, as this is likely to damage the brick arrises. Strong cement mortar should not be used.

BUILDING REPAIRS



*The destruction of an Edwardian house
(Putney)*

Paint and other coatings

Never paint original brick or stonework, or apply commercial coatings of any kind. The natural material and mortar is invariably more attractive and requires less maintenance. Surface coatings may trap moisture and cause serious damage to walls. Frequent, costly redecoration will be necessary. Pointing or other repairs will be more difficult and it may be harder to recognise any defects. Similarly, rendering, pebbledashing or other commercial surfacing are likely to be irreversible, often obscure original architectural detail, can lead to structural or dampness problems and are always bad neighbours, spoiling the appearance of the street.

Paint removal and cleaning of brickwork

Many paints and other finishes, as well as excessive grime, can be successfully removed by specialists at moderate cost. This may involve the use of strong chemicals and should not be undertaken by the amateur. Initial advice can be obtained from the Council, who may also grant-aid paint removal in certain circumstances. Coarse abrasive or grit blasting techniques should not be used to clean brickwork or remove paint, as they are liable to damage the brick surface permanently.



*Identical buildings before and
after cleaning (Tooting, Battersea)*

BUILDING REPAIRS



do



don't

New openings in walls should retain the proportions of the originals as shown on the right.

Original timber doors should not be replaced with any different pattern, size or material such as UPVC or aluminium. Repair or have them copied if necessary

Windows, Doors and Joinery

The arrangement of openings in the walls of a building should give it an attractive and well ordered appearance as well as lighting the interiors. Typically, the greatest effort is concentrated on the front elevation, but every face of a building can be important to its overall character. The elements which make up the doors or windows are:

(a) size in relation to the total wall area. Buildings vary greatly in this respect, some having large windows giving generous light while others have smaller, but more numerous windows.

(b) proportion - the relationship of height to width. Most traditional houses have windows with a vertical emphasis, often greater than twice as high as they are wide.

(c) material - most windows in traditional houses are of timber construction, although some are iron or steel framed.

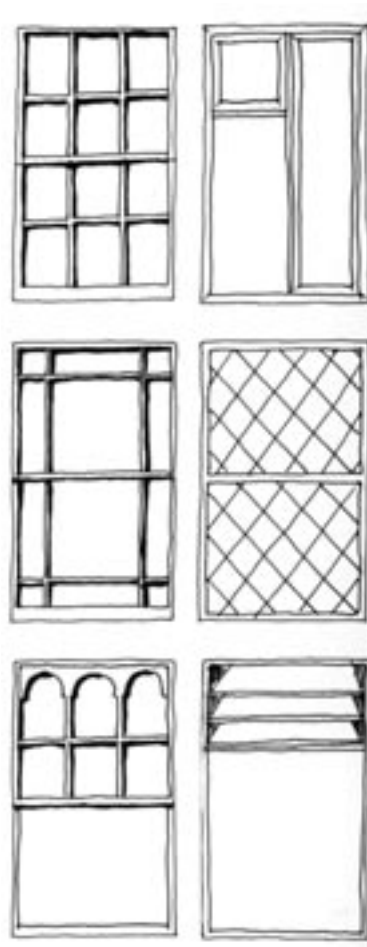
Virtually all doors are timber.

(d) type or pattern - Most opening windows in older houses are either double hung sashes or side hung casements. One type should never be substituted for another, nor should a different style be introduced, either as replacements or in new openings. "Off the peg" windows or doors are only suitable if they match originals in general appearance and detail, and are not different in size, as any alteration to the size of the opening will be expensive and likely to spoil the whole elevation.



BUILDING REPAIRS

*Original windows (illustrated left)
should not be replaced by ones of a
totally different nature (right column)*



Repair or Replace Windows?

Repair of existing windows is preferable to the installation of replacement windows. Properly maintained, timber windows will last indefinitely, as will iron. Early steel windows are more prone to decay, but matching replacements can usually be obtained with better factory protection. If it is necessary to replace a timber window, it should be of the same pattern. A joiner can use the original as the pattern or, if previously replaced incorrectly, use the opportunity to reinstate it from historical evidence. Old glass, which has a different appearance to modern glass, should be saved for re-use. Windows should be refitted in the original positions in the opening, i.e. the depth of reveals should not alter, and any new openings and windows constructed to match them. Installation of secondary windows can achieve the benefits of double glazing without adversely affecting the appearance of the building.

*Window alterations like this are bad
neighbours, devalue the house and
will not be permitted if applied for
(Battersea)*



B U I L D I N G R E P A I R S

The cost of double-glazed replacement windows is unlikely to be recovered in heat saving over the design life of the windows, and sealed units can lead to condensation problems. Upvc or aluminium replacement windows should be avoided in traditional buildings and may devalue them:

(a) they cannot reproduce the dimensions and detailing of even simple traditional windows completely accurately, and complex glazing bar patterns, curved or delicately moulded sections, etc., are impossible. Glass in large sheets, even if false glazing bars are applied, can give a deadening effect to the elevation.

(b) a variety of different systems on a street of similar houses will eventually spoil the whole group.

(c) they are not necessarily maintenance-free and if damaged or defective, repair or replacement may be difficult or expensive.

Safety Note: Windows can be a principal means of escape in an emergency such as fire. Never replace the only opening window in a room with a fixed one, and always ensure that keys to locks will be immediately to hand if an emergency arises.



Replacing original windows with different patterns or materials is expensive, visually inferior and can devalue property

BUILDING REPAIRS

Roofs

After the walls, the roof of a building is its largest and most prominent element. Its form, pitch, detailing and materials result partly from the overall need to make the building weathertight, but also partly from the architectural design and whether the roofspace is designed to contain habitable accommodation.

In Wandsworth, nearly all traditional roofs are covered in slate or clay tile, sometimes with ornament or detail in other materials such as lead or copper. Slates and tiles vary in colour and size, and tiles in pattern as well. Where a roof meets a wall, parapet or chimney stack, there is usually a stepped lead flashing to weatherproof the joint. Hips and ridges may be covered with lead rolls or special tiles. Ornamental ridge tiles and clay or lead finials are not uncommon.

Slate is an extremely durable material with a long life if properly maintained. Failure is most frequently due to rotting fixing nails or battens, and a large proportion of slates can usually be salvaged for re-use, allowing renewal in the original material at reasonable cost. Missing slates can be made up with second-hand. It is important to obtain the correct size to match the original. Any decorative elements should be carefully removed and replaced on completion. Lead detailing or ornament should be replaced, or if lost in the past, reinstated. Decorative patterns should be repeated when repairing or recovering. If cost saving is crucial, and salvaged slates cannot be obtained, a good quality artificial slate may be satisfactory when viewed from the street. Inferior products should be avoided.

Ornamental detail on ridges and gable apex as here, should always be conserved, not removed



Carefully restored roof, brick, ornament and windows – a credit to any area. (Wandsworth)

BUILDING REPAIRS

Detail of a new clay tiled roof



Clay tiles come in many shapes and sizes, the most common being small and plain. Larger varieties include pantiles, interlocking rolls or Bridgewater tiles. The best quality are handmade, but most are machine made. As with slate, retaining original detailing and replacement or reinstatement of any ornament should be the aim, and repair or recovering should be in the original material.

Alternative roofing materials may save on initial outlay, but may be incorrect for the pitch of the roof, too heavy for the existing roof structure, less durable, or harmful to the appearance of the house or street. Remember that if the unity of the street is one of its features, every different roof material or colour will detract further from this unity, and the whole street will suffer.



Contrasting roof material and obvious join spoils the group (Roehampton)

Selecting the correct colour for repairs or renewals is extremely important. If appropriate salvaged materials are not available, it is generally best to choose new supplies of the original colour as when it was new, since these will eventually weather to match their surroundings, whereas a colour which may be closer initially may weather to a completely different shade. If new material looks too harsh it can sometimes be toned in, which will not affect its long-term appearance. The original colour of a tile can be ascertained from its underside, and any replacements compared with it. Previous use of non-matching or inferior materials such as concrete tiles can of course be reversed, although it may be expensive. The Council may be prepared to grant aid suitable cases.

BUILDING REPAIRS

Rainwater Disposal and other External Pipes

Gutters, rainwater and soil pipes are usually of cast iron, but are frequently being replaced in other materials. As with a roof, it is very important to keep them in good repair, as leaks can lead to severe damage from water penetration, such as timber rot, decaying plaster and spalling stone or brick. In many cases local defects or damage can be repaired with a matching length or joint of pipe or gutter. If replacement is necessary, matching sections should be obtained. Cast aluminium guttering is made to match the most common cast iron originals, and will not rust. PVC replacements may not be available to the same profile as the original, may become brittle with age and are easily damaged. There may be opportunities to simplify the layout of any external pipes.



Defective gutters and pipes have caused severe damage to this listed house. (Wandsworth)

BUILDING REPAIRS



Richness, gaiety and craftsmanship in ornament speak silently of life long ago

Other Features and Ornament

These are often the distinctive parts of a building and add considerably to the attractiveness of a house. They may represent a higher degree of individual craftsmanship, although sometimes the simplest houses are the better crafted because they do not attempt to look grander than they are, and money has been spent on sound construction instead. A building's ornament is an essential part of its original design, and the outward appearance will invariably suffer if it is not retained and kept in good repair. Elements such as moulded cornices, console brackets, string courses, column capitals, moulded or carved brick, decorative tiles, metalwork, stained glass, intricate timberwork, a special painting scheme, unusual terracotta work or chimney pots all fit into this category. Repair or reinstatement may be more difficult, as specialised techniques or commissioning reproductions may be involved. However, they are usually understood and known to professionals in the conservation field and suppliers or craftspeople can be found to undertake the work. The Council may be able to assist in some circumstances, and has information on suppliers and craftspeople.

Other elements which contribute to the external appearance should not be altered or replaced with other than an exact replica wherever possible, nor should additions be made which are out of keeping. Patterned brickwork, precision gauged arches, carved lintels, original number plates, boot scrapers, bell pulls and all ironmongery, stone steps, cast hopper heads, etc., should not be overlooked. Chimneys are an important part of traditional British townscape and the main stacks of any house should always be retained, even if they are no longer in use. A ventilation cap may be fitted. Copings on walls or parapets, original paving to paths, or early outdoor lighting should be treated the same. Any new lighting should also be sensitive to the period and style of the house.

B U I L D I N G R E P A I R S

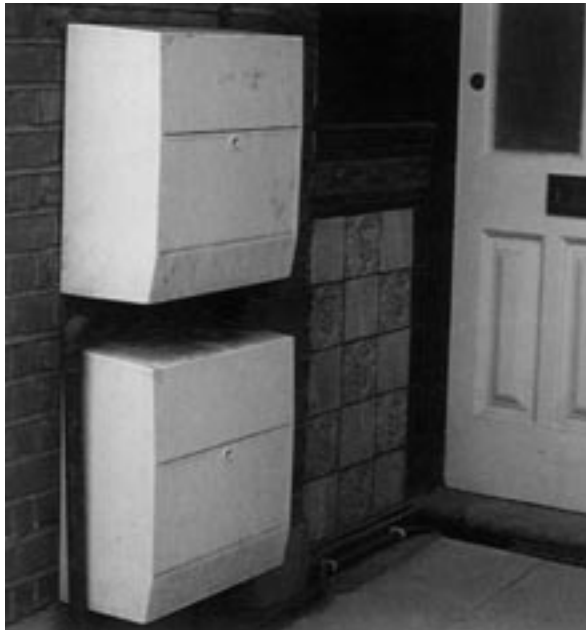
External Painting - Joinery and Metalwork

Except for front doors white has become the predominant colour for exterior joinery, while black is usual for metalwork. This convention provides unity in a group and there is no difficulty in subsequent colour matching. If other colours are chosen, they should be historically correct for the period. Lurid or primary colours were never intended on old buildings or most modern ones. If a rendered or roughcast wall was intended to be painted, the colour should be as near as possible to the original, and the paint selected should still allow walls to “breathe”. Rendering was often intended to resemble stone ashlar, and any old work of this type should not be painted, but repaired in matching colour and finish.

Services and Other External Fixings

Service connections for gas, electricity, telephone or television, can all disfigure a building. Cables or pipes should not be run up or across the face of a building. Conventional TV antennae can be located in loft spaces. Satellite antennae require planning permission in certain circumstances, and should not be located at the front of the house. The Council has approved guidelines on the installation of telecommunications equipment. Service boxes should not be placed in a prominent position. The location of boxes or other apparatus is at the discretion of building owners and not suppliers or installers. Service boxes are now available which can be set into the ground, so that nothing need be mounted on the building at all, or they can be retained internally.

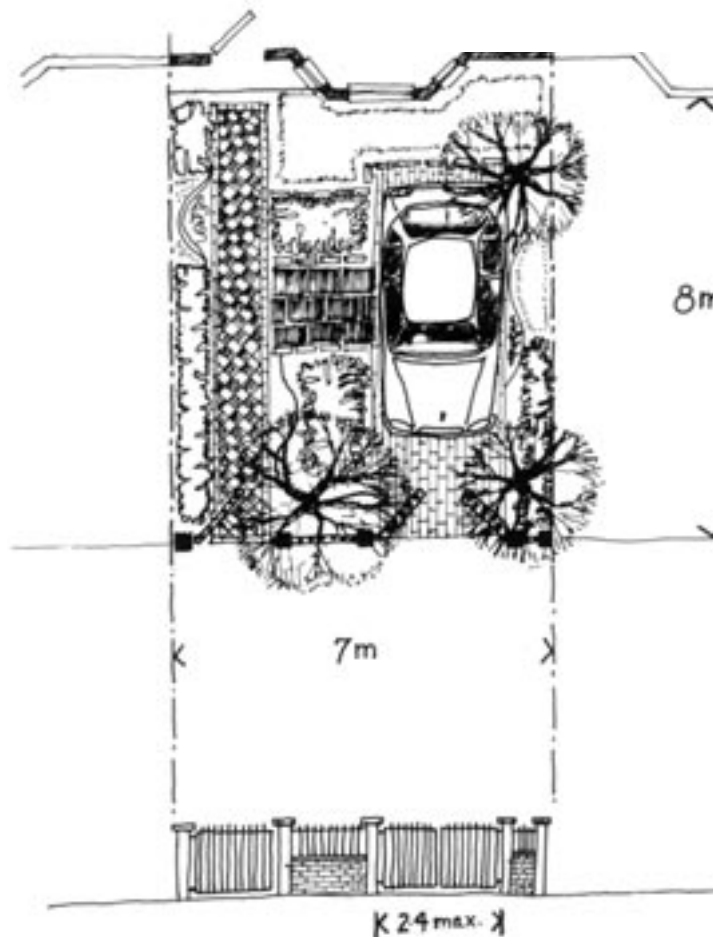
Climbing plants can be very attractive, but certain species can damage masonry and mortar joints. Any fixings should be carefully and firmly secured within mortar joints to avoid damage to facework.



All such eyesores as these should be avoided on any principal elevation

GARDENS AND OTHER EXTERNAL AREAS

*Front gardens less than these dimensions
are unlikely to accommodate a car
without harm to house and street scene*



The front garden whatever its size provides an opportunity to soften or enhance the look of the building. This is largely a matter of taste, though paths, edging, ornament, etc, should retain the original materials, reinstate them, or introduce those which would not have been out of place when the house was built. The treatment of a front garden can also increase a sense of seclusion, or aid security. The Council has published Design Guidelines on Personal Safety and Security. The design of rear gardens is generally a matter of personal taste, though their appearance can also contribute to the character of an area.

Generally, only the front gardens of larger villas designed for carriages, or those with drives and garages can easily accommodate cars. With smaller houses and gardens, the setting of the house and character of the street and area will suffer greatly if cars dominate the frontage. Unless special circumstances, such as access for the disabled, outweigh normal criteria, no attempt should be made to accommodate a car in a front garden unless there is sufficient width not to interfere with the original path, and sufficient depth to erect inward opening gates which can be closed when the car is parked. Hard surfacing should be kept to a minimum, be in a sympathetic material, and leave sufficient space for shrubs and other planting close-by. Approval of the Borough Engineer must be sought for all crossovers from a public highway.



The importance of front gardens and boundaries to the street scene cannot be overstated.

GARDENS AND OTHER EXTERNAL AREAS

Trees

Trees are valued for their own beauty and can make a valuable contribution to the setting of almost any building. It is important however when considering any planting to take account not only of the aesthetic quality of trees, but of other factors such as eventual size, spread, speed of growth, moisture take-up, rooting system and other factors, to ensure that the trees will continue to provide enjoyment and not become a nuisance or danger to your building or your neighbour's. The Council's Guide to the Care and Maintenance of Trees is available on request.

Boundaries

Boundaries, especially those to the street, are an essential feature of any property. They may be a simple hedge, post and rail, or an elaborate design in brick, stone and ornamental iron. Whatever the case, they are very important to the attractiveness of a street. Original boundary treatments, especially those built for a group of houses, should not be altered or demolished, and every effort should be made to reinstate missing boundaries. If original boundaries (e.g. front railings) have been lost, reinstatement is often possible from photographic evidence, or by copying surviving examples elsewhere in the street. If no evidence can be found, a design in the appropriate period style is usually the best alternative. In some areas of the Borough, schemes of iron railing replacement, to original types lost during the Second World War are being promoted by the Council. Where a whole group, terrace or estate has been designed to have uniform front boundaries, alteration of any kind is a bad neighbour which will spoil the street scene. Planning permission is required for the erection of any form of boundary fence, wall or railing over 1 metre high on any highway frontage, or 2 metres high elsewhere. In conservation areas consent may be required to demolish walls etc..



Any style of railing or gate can be reinstated where missing. Original pattern railings (as illustrated) have been newly manufactured for a conservation area (Tooting).

REINSTATEMENT OF ORIGINAL FEATURES



The entire ground floor front of this listed building on the right, has been reinstated following removal of a modern cafe shopfront (Wandsworth)

Grants

While repairs to the original fabric of a building are always preferred, features of a house which have been lost can be reinstated and unsympathetic or poor quality additions removed. This will enhance its appearance and value. In cases where the character or appearance of a listed building or conservation area would be enhanced, the Council (and in certain circumstances other bodies) may be prepared to provide grant aid. Even if substantial change too difficult or costly to remove has already occurred it may still be possible to carry out some works (for example roof material, joinery, front boundary treatment, landscape etc.) to enhance a house and its setting in relation to its neighbours.



By contrast, a lovely doorcase was removed, and the scar rendered over, where there was no control over it. (Putney)



MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS

Most houses undergo many changes in their lifetime, to suit the needs of successive occupants. One of the benefits of this type of dwelling is that they are so adaptable internally. If the building is not of special architectural or historic importance, this is largely a matter of taste and convenience, although it is still desirable to retain the well-crafted original internal features which go to make up the character and integrity of a house, whatever its period. Existing ventilation should not be removed or sealed. Any structural alteration, for example removing an internal structural-wall or chimney breast, will need Building Control approval. The advice of suitably qualified professionals should be sought before embarking on any major or costly work.

*It would be difficult to imagine a less
harmonious addition than this one.
(Balham)*

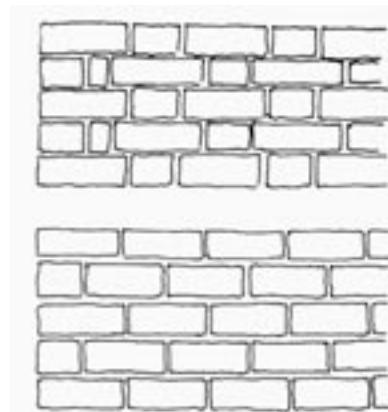


When major changes are being considered to the external envelope the public aspects may be affected. Oversized or poorly designed extensions not suited to the original building are one of the main causes of damage to the streetscene. It is often possible however to alter or extend a property without harm to its character – indeed it can add to the interest of a building when its form has evolved over a period of time. Success depends upon striking the right balance between adaptation and sensitivity to the original design. The “golden rules” to follow when planning any alteration or addition are that, when completed, the work should appear as if it could have been part of the original design, that the building is once again a complete and harmonious whole, that it does not look out of place in relation to its neighbours or surroundings, and that it preserves the amenities of houseowner and neighbour alike.

MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS



This extension has been done so carefully as to be almost unnoticeable



The solid brick walls of older houses are usually built in Flemish Bond (above), while modern cavity walls are in stretcher bond (below). The bond in new work should match that of the existing, especially on principal elevations

Style

It is partly a matter of style – ie. copying the form, materials, details and ornament of the existing building in the design of the new elements. The best examples of this approach are those which are not noticed at all – they appear always to have been there:

(a) The form of a building is its overall shape, the proportions, heights and lengths of its walls, arrangement of openings, angle of pitch of its roofs, etc. Extending the existing form of a wall might mean, for example, incorporating projections or setbacks in the brickwork to reflect the existing elevation. Roofs over extensions should be the same type as those of the original house, (e.g. hipped, gabled, mansarded, etc.) and of the same pitch. Different roof types or pitches on the same building can make the whole unattractive, while flat roofed extensions to pitched roofed houses rarely succeed.

(b) Using exactly the same materials as the original building is most likely to produce a successful extension. This may require skill, and determination not to accept second best. Specialist advice should be sought where necessary, and the Council may be able to help.

(c) The details of the existing building construction should be repeated in any extension to give a unified appearance to the building. This includes brick bond – the pattern made by the joints - traditional solid walls of older houses are usually constructed in Flemish Bond, while houses with cavity walls are generally in Stretcher or Running Bond; band courses in brickwork; openings and corners - contrasting stone or brick dressings may be used - gauged or turned brick arches, stone lintels, moulded plaster, etc.; eaves; and ornament - if a house possesses distinctive ornament any extension which omitted it would probably look unsatisfactory. Certain ornamental elements, such as decorative chimney pots, balcony railings, terracotta finials or ridge tiles, moulded bricks, etc., were mass produced and may still be obtainable from specialist manufacturers or as architectural salvage. Others, such as carved stonework or decorative plaster, may need to be reproduced by craftspeople. The Council may be able to help, and there are commercial directories of such firms.

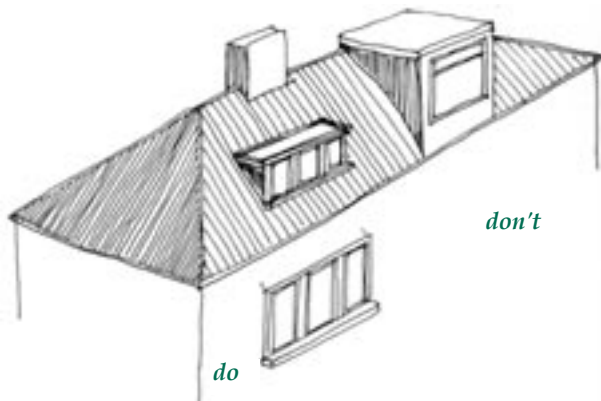
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS



A new dormer – well matched to the original gable (Balham)



An original dormer – good examples reflect the style and proportions of the house



A new dormer should be carefully matched in scale and proportion to the existing house

If elements which are not part of the original house, a dormer for example, are proposed, they should be designed in the manner of those of the same period and style, possibly using examples from similar houses.

A less usual approach is deliberately to distinguish the new work from the old, allowing contemporary solutions to be adopted in traditional buildings. This is generally applicable only to larger additions and requires exceptional skill on the part of the designer to ensure that the whole building remains a harmonious and attractive composition. A third approach, if the function permits and the house plot is large enough, is a detached building, such as a garage or studio.

Other principles

Other factors determining what kind of extension may be acceptable include:

- (a) size – an extension should not be so large as to dominate the existing building or the street scene;
- (b) overdevelopment – the amount of accommodation relative to the plot size, proximity to the boundary, and density (i.e. number of rooms per acre) of development – extensions should not compromise original garden settings, and those which cover more than half the length of the garden are unlikely to be acceptable;
- (c) the amenity of neighbours, including the effect on sunlight, daylight and outlook, potential overlooking and noise.

Where the Council exercises planning control, permission will not normally be granted for schemes which are detrimental to the overall street appearance or which do not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas or listed buildings.

MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS



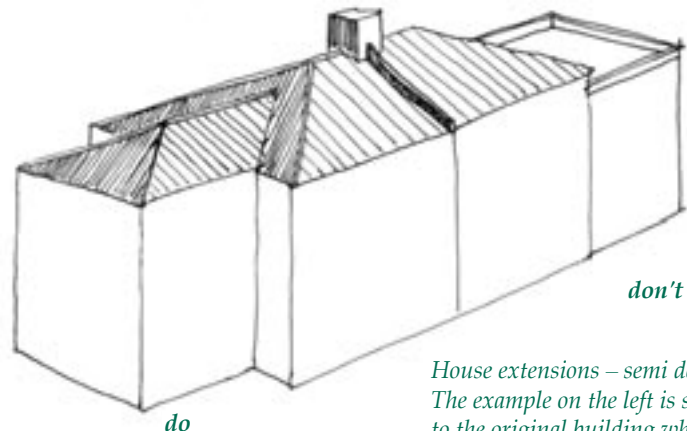
Bin stores should be unobtrusive or even dispensed with – and certainly not block entrances

Different Types of Additions/Extensions - Detailed Guidance

Front: Additions at the front are seldom successful and should only be attempted in streets where houses are dissimilar. Enclosed porches which are out of keeping with the style of building, or disrupt the rhythm of a group of similar houses, are generally harmful. Garages or other extensions which project forward from the main front wall are likely to be over-dominant and disrupt views down the street. Sheds and other ancillary buildings are normally not acceptable in front gardens.

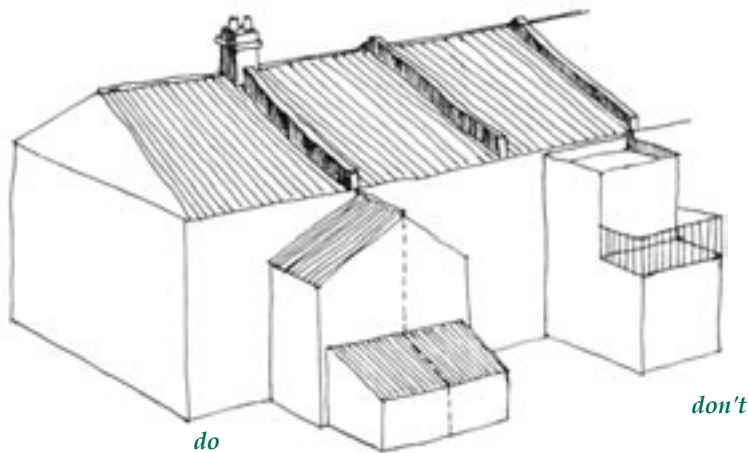
Bin stores at the fronts of houses require planning permission and should be avoided at front boundaries or immediately adjacent to an entrance. There is often no need for them at all if bins are sited unobtrusively at the side or behind a hedge. Where conversions give rise to a need for several bin stores, the Council will seek a design which is least obtrusive and still permits an attractive boundary to be retained or reinstated.

Flank: It is often possible to extend houses at the sides, provided there is enough space and the extension will not create a “terraced” effect in a street of individual buildings. The design should extend the style of the existing building and the extension should not dominate or compete with the house.



House extensions – semi detached. The example on the left is sympathetic to the original building whereas the one on the right clashes

MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS



*House extensions – terraces (rear only)
Again, the example on the left is the
better of the two*

Rear: Generally the rear offers most scope for additions but it is still important to maintain an architectural unity, within both the house and the group. Roofs of extensions should follow the same form and pitch as those of the main roof. Flat roofed extensions to traditional buildings are seldom harmonious and they can lead to defects. Roof terraces overlooking neighbouring properties are not acceptable. Some form of pitched or hipped roof is normally possible though care should be taken to avoid worsening the effect on light to neighbouring properties. Roof material should be that of the main house, but must in any case be appropriate for the pitch e.g. plain tiles should be at 45° or above, while slate can be used down to about 25°, and metal roofs such as lead, copper or zinc down to very shallow pitches. Proportions and detailing of openings and windows should follow those of the main house. Conservatory extensions should also be thought of as part of the overall house design. Form, materials, scale and proportion of various elements should harmonise with the main house. Avoid the temptation to over embellish if the house itself is a simple design.



*Radical changes to roof shapes, flat
roofed extensions and terraces over-
looking neighbours are not acceptable*

MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS

Oversize dormers and bulky roof extensions are unacceptable. (Battersea, Roehampton)



A front gable has been demolished to make way for this eyesore. (Southfields)

Roof Extensions

Roof extensions at the front of a house, certain rear or side extensions and all extensions in conservation areas need planning permission. Alterations to the roof profile can be particularly sensitive and the overall shape of the roof should not be altered, especially in a group of similar houses. Rooflights or small dormer windows can be an appropriate way of lighting roofspace, especially at the rear, but the scale and proportions of any dormers should reflect those of the house as a whole, and adopt the same materials and roof pattern as the house itself and/or other sensitively-designed dormers in the group. They should be placed well away from the eaves and flank or party walls and below the ridge. Oversized dormers or bulky extensions intended to create substantial additional space are unacceptable. Roof extensions are not generally acceptable on front elevations unless they can be well set back behind an existing parapet with minimal impact on the street scene.

Garages and Car-ports

If there is space for a garage extension to the house, its design and materials, including garage door and roof shape, should harmonize with the house. Even where it is to be detached and not easily seen from the road, this approach, although more expensive than a prefab, can enhance appearance and value. A lean-to or “coach house” type of garage on the flank should be set back from the front of the house. Forward projections are unlikely to be acceptable visually and could detract from neighbours’ amenity. A car-port of simple design and sympathetic materials may be satisfactory if it does not detract from or obscure the house itself. Car ports on front forecourts are not normally acceptable.

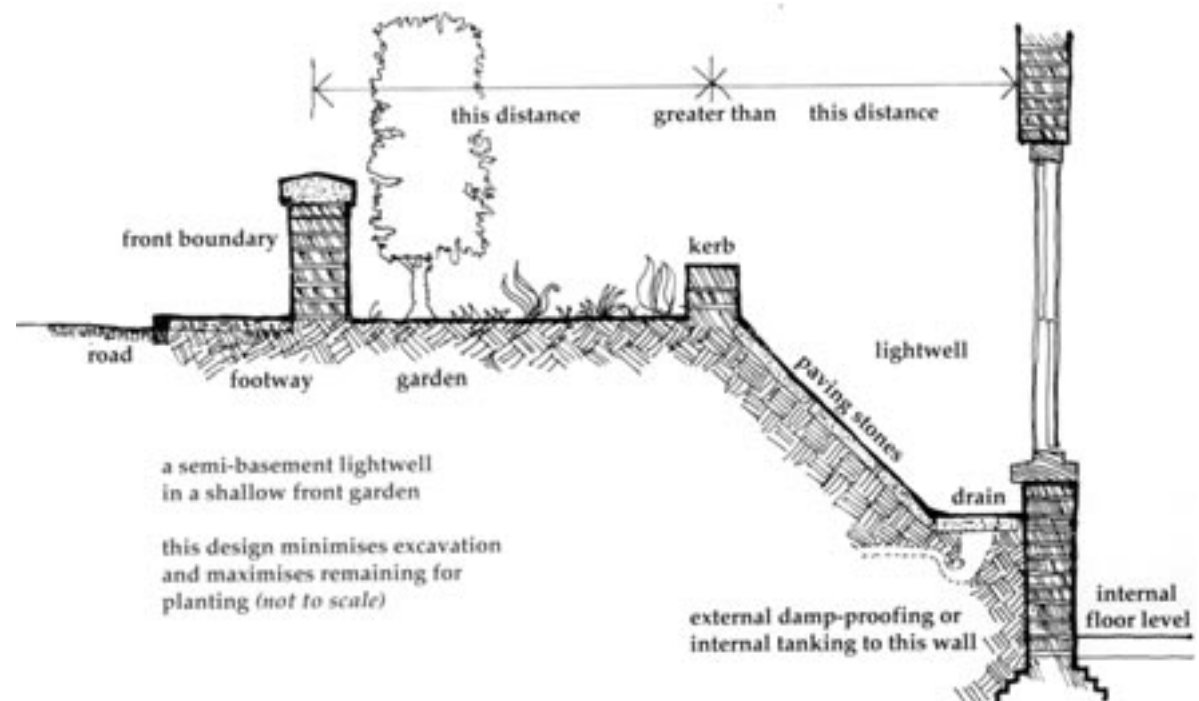
Extensions on or near the boundary

You will need a Party Wall Agreement if you wish to alter, demolish, build onto or fix any other structure to an existing party wall. When planning any other extension or garage close to the boundary, you should give consideration to the question of access for maintenance and to the layout of gutters and downpipes to avoid them oversailing your neighbour’s property.

MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS

Basements and Lightwells

In rare cases, it may be possible to excavate a basement or semi-basement to enlarge a house provided that the depth of the existing foundations is established beforehand and the work is agreed in advance both with neighbours and the Building Control Division. The impact on the appearance of the building and streetscene will be taken into account by the Council when determining any planning application. Enlarging a lightwell at the front or altering the front elevation and windows to comply with lighting standards can detract from the appearance of both the building and the front garden. Changes to front elevations arising from excavation of lightwells should match the original building, and at least half of the front garden depth should remain, properly landscaped with its original or reinstated front boundary treatment. Excavations must not adversely affect services under the footway and a retaining wall will be needed to carry the surcharge load of road traffic. In areas of the Borough where basements are liable to flooding new habitable floorspace should not be created in basements.



STATUTORY APPROVALS



Unauthorised work to a listed building is an offence

Planning Permission must be sought for certain kinds of extensions, while smaller ones and certain minor works may be exempt for single dwelling houses. While every possibility cannot be covered in a guide of of this kind, general guidance is given in a leaflet published by the Council. If you have a flat, planning permission will be required for any form of extension. All planning applications are considered on their individual merit, against the requirements of the law, government and Council policy, the effect of the proposal on amenity etc. and the appearance of the street or area. Within conservation areas greater control over appearance is exercised. The Council will normally consult neighbours on a planning application. Council officers can advise on whether a proposal is likely to be acceptable, and may be able to offer specific design advice or suggest ways of overcoming objections.

In addition, consent is required with certain minor exceptions for demolition of any building or part of a building in a conservation area. Consent will not normally be granted if loss of part of the area's valued character or appearance would result, or if there are no approved plans for a replacement.

The strictest control is applied in respect of any building included in the statutory list of Buildings of Architectural and Historic Interest. Any alterations including such matters as painting or minor internal change require Listed Building Consent if they are likely to affect the character of the building. The Council also has powers to secure repairs to listed buildings in severe disrepair.

It is an offence to alter or demolish a listed building or part of one, or any other building or fixed object within its curtilage in a manner affecting its character without Listed Building Consent, or to demolish a building or part of one in a conservation area without Conservation Area Consent. The Council must be notified of any

Borough Planner's Service

June 1996



Making More of Your Loft



Awarded for excellence to the
Planning Service





Making more of your loft

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Contacts

If at any stage you are not sure about the advice or how it applies to you, the Area Planning Officer for your part of the Borough will be happy to help.

Planning Enquiries (020) 8871 6638

Building Control (020) 8871 7620

Introduction

Loft conversions are a popular way of getting more room in your house or top floor flat. But one way or another you will need the Council's permission, so before you start you need to consider whether your house is suitable and the likelihood that your plans will meet the Council's requirements.

Planning Permission

You will generally need planning permission if the house is in a conservation area and you will be altering the shape of the roof. Outside a conservation area you must get planning permission to extend the front of the roof or raise the height of the ridge or if you are extending the roof by more than a certain amount. You should always check first with the Council's Borough Planner's Service to find out whether you will need planning permission for your project.

Building Regulations

You will certainly need building regulations approval and the Council's Building Control Section will tell you what is required. The Building Regulations impose certain structural and other requirements particularly where it comes to access stairs and this may limit what options are available to you. But in meeting these requirements the result may be a conflict with planning objectives concerning the external appearance of the proposed extension. It is important to find out as early as possible, as it may mean you will not easily get planning permission.

The purpose of this leaflet is to help you plan your scheme so that you are more likely to be successful in getting what you want. It sets out simple guidance which describes the sort of things the Council will take into account when assessing your plans.

There are 2 main factors the Council's planners will be looking at:

- 1 The impact that your scheme may have on the amenities of your neighbours, e.g.
 - will they suffer a loss of daylight or sunlight to any of their rooms?
 - will they be overlooked from any windows in the new rooms you are proposing and how will this affect their privacy?
- 2 The impact that your scheme may have on the appearance of your house and on the area generally. This is important because other people will have to look at it and it becomes more of a public issue when a large number of people will be able to see it.

These two factors are explained more fully in the form of 10 questions which you should consider when planning your project. This will help you to understand the steps the Council will follow when considering your application for planning permission.

Planning policy

The Council's planning policies relating to loft extensions are :

".....roof extensions should generally reflect the style, proportions, materials and details of the existing building.

Extensions should not be so large as to dominate and compete with the building."

"Roof extensions are not generally appropriate in the front of the house, particularly in a group of uniform design, unless they can be well set back behind an existing parapet with minimal impact on the street scene; dormers should be placed well away from eaves and flank or party walls and be below and not raise the height of the ridge."

1 Is the loft space large enough?

Some roof types are generally more suited to conversion than others in terms of size, shape and construction. Some roof types are easier than others to convert.

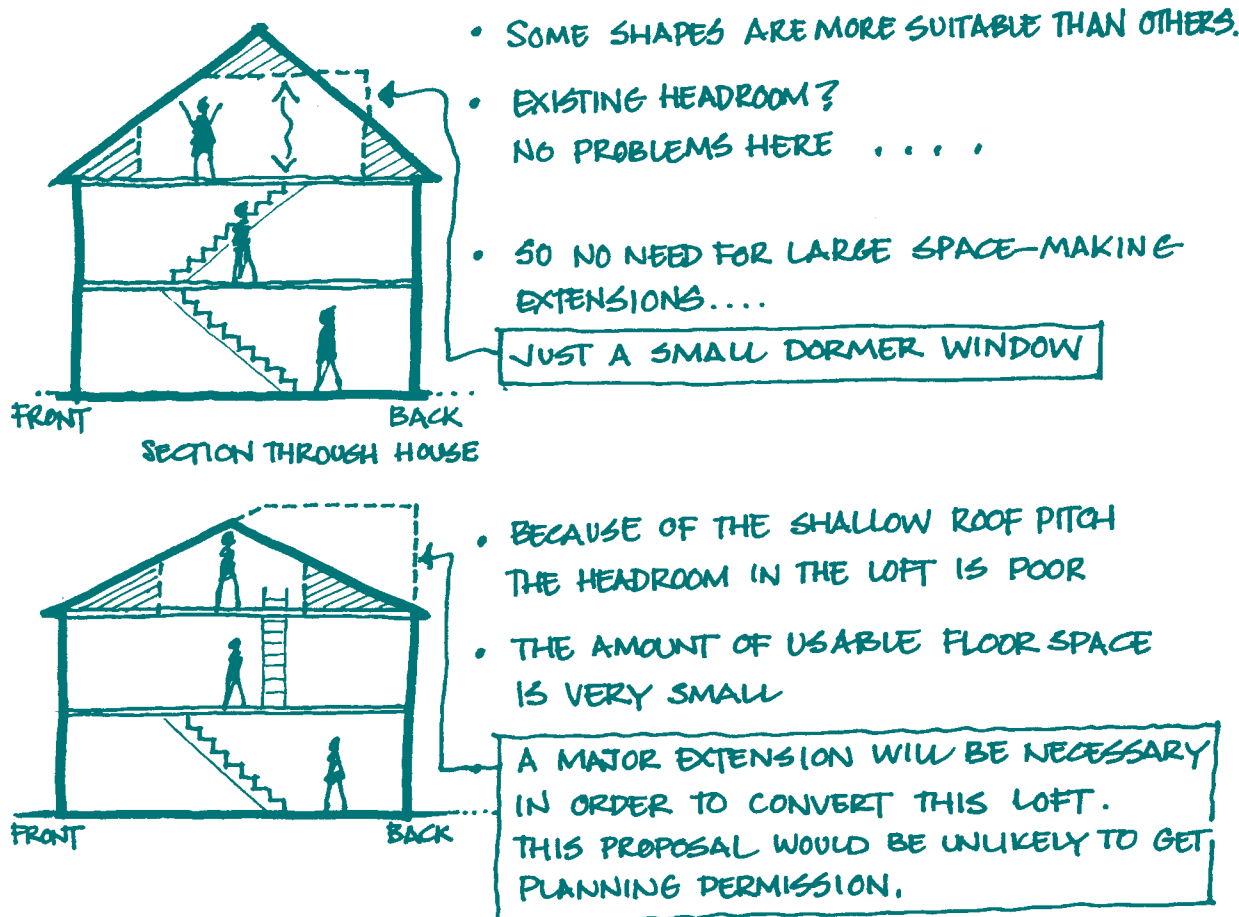
Ideally, your existing loft should be large enough to accommodate the room(s) you want without any need for major extensions. All you should then need are dormer windows - i.e. windows inserted into the sloping roof to light the space inside - or even just a roof-light.

More often though, roofs are extended to create headroom where none exists at present. Generally, there is no minimum ceiling height requirement in the Building Regulations, but a ceiling lower than 2.1m (7'0") will seem cramped. Remember also that a new structural floor and roof will have to be built and this means that the finished headroom will be about 300mm (1'0") less than the headroom you have in your loft at present. To achieve a reasonable amount of space with adequate headroom may mean major alterations to the loft which could alter the look of your house quite dramatically. This could mean that the scheme would be ruled out because of its poor appearance.

If you have a modern house with a trussed roof construction it may be possible to convert the loft space but you may find that it will be a complicated and expensive job.

How will access be gained to the loft space? In the case of many semi-detached and terraced houses the existing stairs are located beside a party wall. This means that the most efficient and logical location for the new stair into the loft is also against the party wall. Since the new stair must rise into that part of the loft where there is least head-room, it will be necessary to provide an extension to the roof right against the party wall. This is something we try to avoid because the extension would almost certainly look bulky and out of proportion to the roof.

The commonest problem is the need to extend the roof to accommodate the new access staircase and meet the building regulation requirement for headroom over the stairs of at least 1.9m. Often this depends on the shape as well as the height of the existing roof.



2 Is your house/flat in a conservation area?

There are more than 40 conservation areas in Wandsworth. You could be living in one of them.

Conservation areas are those parts of the borough which have a special character or are of historic interest. Changes to the appearance of buildings are closely scrutinised to ensure that the special quality of the area will be retained. If your house is in a conservation area any alterations to the roof should preserve or enhance the special character or appearance of that particular area. This may mean that the possibility for acceptable schemes is much more limited. It will depend on the type of roof you have, the amount you want to alter it and how visible that alteration will be.

3 Is the roof clearly visible from the street?

Take a good look at your roof. Can it be seen clearly from the street outside or from any neighbouring streets? If it can, then the appearance of your extension will be important because your roof is part of the street scene.

The roofs of end houses of terraces are more widely visible than the roofs of mid-terraced houses. Semi-detached and detached houses usually have roofs which are extensively visible from the street, and corner buildings are always prominent.

If you are proposing to alter the front of the roof or any other widely visible part then it will be more of an issue - especially if you live in a conservation area. Once again you will have to pay special attention to what it looks like from the outside.

CORNER AND END OF TERRACE HOUSES ARE PARTICULARLY PROMINENT



4 Will your neighbours be able to see your roof extension?

Generally, where gardens are longer it is possible to see more of the surrounding roofs.

Where the backs of buildings are closer, views of the roof are more likely to be confined to just a few of your neighbours but because they are closer their amenities may be more affected.



5 Will the scheme affect your neighbours' amenities?

It is important that your neighbours should not suffer unacceptable harm to the normal enjoyment of their homes as a result of your proposal. This could be:

- loss of privacy as a result of an unreasonable amount of overlooking.
- loss of daylight or sunlight.
- visual impact.

Privacy

A new window (or windows) in your converted loft space could overlook one of your neighbours' windows and cause an unreasonable loss of privacy, especially where the room overlooked is a bedroom or living room.

If your extension would enable access to an existing flat roof or proposes a roof terrace or balcony feature this could seriously affect your neighbours' privacy. Roof terraces often allow unrestricted views over back gardens and into other people's windows which can be a nuisance. So, ensure that your scheme will not include new windows or a terrace which will enable you to see more of your neighbours!

Daylight / Sunlight and Visual Intrusion

Sky views from buildings and back gardens are often limited and, depending on the orientation, your extension could cast extensive shadows over your neighbours' property. It is possible to measure the likely impact of your extension on your neighbours' sunlight and daylight but it is more difficult to assess whether it will have an overbearing effect. Look closely at the amount of sun that reaches your neighbour's house and garden and think how this might be affected by your scheme. Try to design a scheme which keeps any impact on your neighbour to a minimum.

6 Do roofs make a special contribution to the townscape of the area?

Where the roofs are a particularly attractive or distinctive feature of the area any alterations will need careful consideration in order to ensure that the special quality is protected.

If roofs are an important feature, what is it that makes them attractive or distinctive? Look at the roofs in your street.

Are they all the same?

Many streets are composed of buildings with similar roof shapes. This regularity is often seen as an attractive feature. Will your proposal fit in or will it spoil the order of things by making your roof stick out like a sore thumb?

Are they all different?

Sometimes there is a great deal of variation in the style and shape of roofs and perhaps a variation in the heights of buildings. It could be that this quality of variety between buildings contributes to making the area attractive. In these circumstances you should aim to maintain the variation by keeping the distinctive appearance of your house.



MANY TERRACES ARE ARRANGED IN FORMAL GROUPS WHERE SEVERAL INDIVIDUAL BUILDINGS ARE PART OF A SYMMETRICAL COMPOSITION. TERRACES LIKE THIS ARE AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THE TOWNSCAPE AND ANY ALTERATIONS TO ROOFS WHICH WOULD BE LIKELY TO SPOIL THEIR QUALITY WILL BE REGISTERED.

OR THEY MAY BE SEMI-DETACHED PAIRS. . .



. . . . WHERE THE HIPPED ROOF FORM EMPHASISES THE GAPS BETWEEN THE PAIRS. A CLUMSY EXTENSION ON ONE HIP SPOILS THE ARRANGEMENT AND THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER

EVEN WHERE THERE IS CONSIDERABLE VARIETY BETWEEN BUILDINGS YOU SHOULD STILL THINK CAREFULLY.



. . . . WILL YOUR PROPOSED EXTENSION BE HARMFUL TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE GROUP. EXISTING VARIETY DOES NOT MEAN 'ANYTHING GOES'!

7 Have alterations to roofs already taken place?

Where the existing roofscape has not been altered it is important to make sure alterations set a good example for the rest to follow. The good schemes can then be copied to ensure a consistently high standard. On the other hand just because a particularly bad alteration

has taken place this should not justify further harm by allowing similar alterations to occur. So don't look at a neighbour's ugly extension and use it as an excuse to do the same thing. Many very bad alterations were carried out before the legislation was tightened up.

By answering all these questions you should, by now, have a clearer idea of the general size and shape of extension which is likely to be acceptable. Now you can begin to consider the details of its appearance.

8 Are the large scale details right?

The large scale details are those which affect the size, shape and overall appearance of the extension. The scale and proportions of the extension should reflect those of the house. The objective should be to produce

an addition which looks as if it belongs to the house. The best schemes often go unnoticed because they appear to have always been there.

THE IDEAL EXTENSION SHOULD BE SIMPLE DORMERS ~

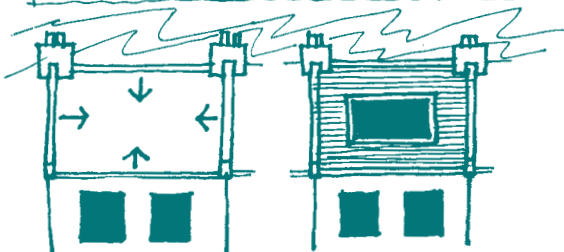


REAR VIEW.

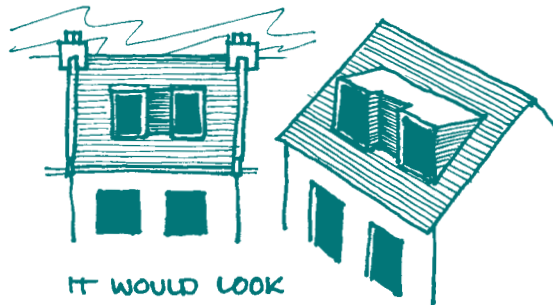
- THEY SHOULD BE REGULARLY SPACED, BUT NOT NECESSARILY IMMEDIATELY ABOVE THE WINDOWS BELOW.
- SIZE SHOULD BE SMALLER THAN THE WINDOWS ON THE TOP STOREY.
- IF THE BUILDING IS PLAIN - THE DORMERS SHOULD BE PLAIN AS WELL.

HOWEVER, SUCH A SIMPLE, STRAIGHTFORWARD EXTENSION IS RARELY POSSIBLE.

POLICY REQUIREMENTS ARE THAT DORMERS SHOULD BE PLACED WELL AWAY FROM EAVES AND FLANK OR PARTY WALLS AND BE BELOW THE RIDGE. THIS LEADS TO



... AN OVER LARGE BOX POORLY RELATED TO THE HOUSE.



IT WOULD LOOK BETTER IF IT WERE DETAILED TO LOOK LIKE TWO DORMERS.

AN EXTENSION BELOW RIDGE HEIGHT IS OFTEN DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE IN SOME ROOFS WHERE HEADROOM IS LIMITED. AS A RESULT EXTENSIONS CAN LOOK BULKY.



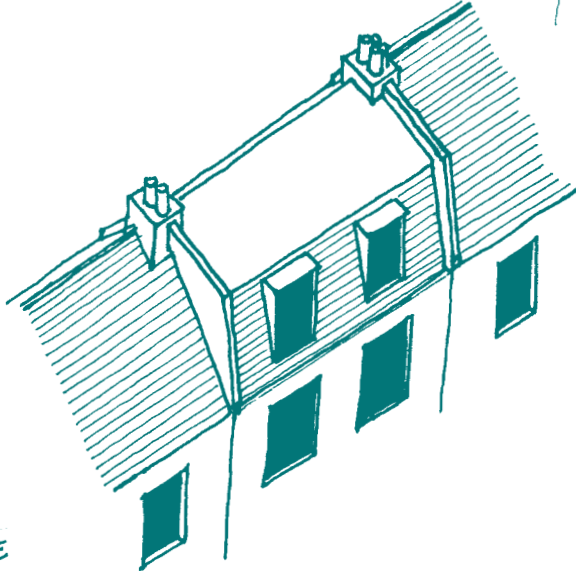
REAR VIEW



REAR VIEW

..... OR EVEN WORSE WHERE THE EXTENSION SITS ON THE EAVES AS WELL

- IN CERTAIN SITUATIONS — ON MID TERRACED HOUSES WHERE THE REAR ROOF SLOPE CAN'T BE WIDELY SEEN — AN EXTENSION WHICH RUNS BETWEEN THE PARTY WALLS MAY BE APPROPRIATE



- FLAT ROOF EXTENDS BACK FROM RIDGE
- REAR ROOF SLOPES BACK AT 70°
- PARTY WALLS BUILT UP ON EACH SIDE
- DORMER WINDOWS PROJECT FROM SLOPING ROOF SECTION.

THE APPEARANCE OF AN EXTENSION LIKE THIS CAN BE BETTER BECAUSE IT LOOKS LIKE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE HOUSE RATHER THAN AN UNRELATED ADDITION. SO IN SOME RESPECT IT ACCORDS WITH THE POLICY OBJECTIVE — ALTHOUGH LARGE IT DOES NOT 'DOMINATE' THE HOUSE AND DORMER WINDOWS CAN BE RELATED TO EXISTING FENESTRATION PATTERN.



ON THE OTHER HAND — BUILDING UP VERTICALLY ON THE BACK AND CLADDING IN TILE OR SLATE WILL PRODUCE A BULKY EXTRA STOREY WHICH SPOILS THE LOOK OF THE HOUSE

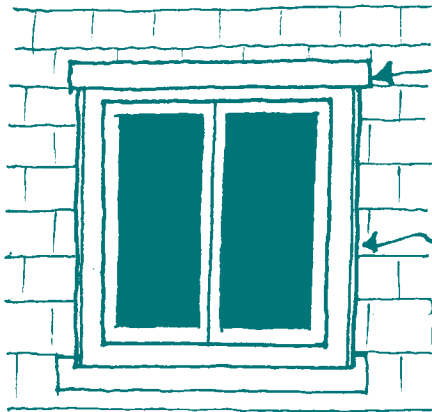
9 Are the small scale details right?

The small scale details should be copied from the house. This means repeating where possible the type of construction and materials found in the original construction. If you can't copy from the house then look for a building of the same style and period and replicate the feature you want from this example.

You may wish to deliberately go for a contemporary design where the new work stands out from the old. This will require exceptional skill on the part of the designer to ensure that the whole building remains a harmonious and attractive composition.

- SMALL SCALE DETAILS ARE IMPORTANT TO THE SUCCESS OF A SCHEME. GENERALLY, DORMER WINDOWS SHOULD BE AS SIMPLE AS POSSIBLE AND PROBLEMS ARISE THROUGH CLUMSY DETAILING.

THE RIGHT WAY ~

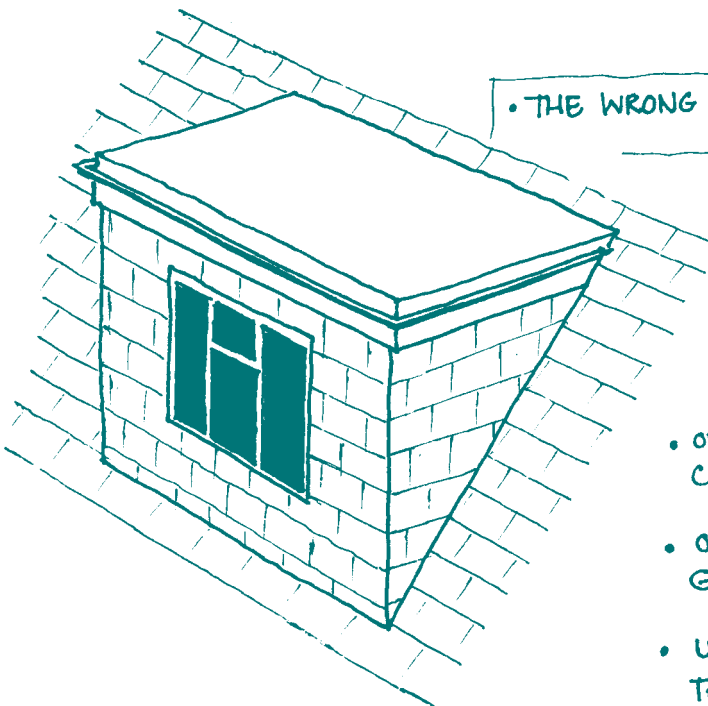


FASCIA VERY SMALL - ONLY A SIMPLE MOULDING TO COVER THE EDGE OF THE FLAT LEAD ROOF. A GUTTER IS RARELY NEEDED IF THE ROOF OF THE DORMER IS MADE TO FALL BACK TO THE MAIN ROOF

THE THICKNESS OF THE CHEEKS OR SIDES OF THE DORMER SHOULD BE ONLY SLIGHTLY WIDER THAN THE WINDOW FRAME. THE CHEEKS SHOULD BE IN LEAD OR SOMETIMES CLAY TILES (WHERE THE MAIN ROOF IS CLAY TILE).

- A GASH WINDOW OR SIMPLE CASEMENT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE, CHOICE DEPENDS ON THE STYLE OF THE HOUSE.

• THE WRONG WAY TO DO IT ~



- OVER SIZED STRUCTURE CLAD IN SLATE OR TILE
- OVER SIZED FASCIA AND GUTTER.
- UGLY PROPORTIONS SPOIL THE ROOF AND THE HOUSE.

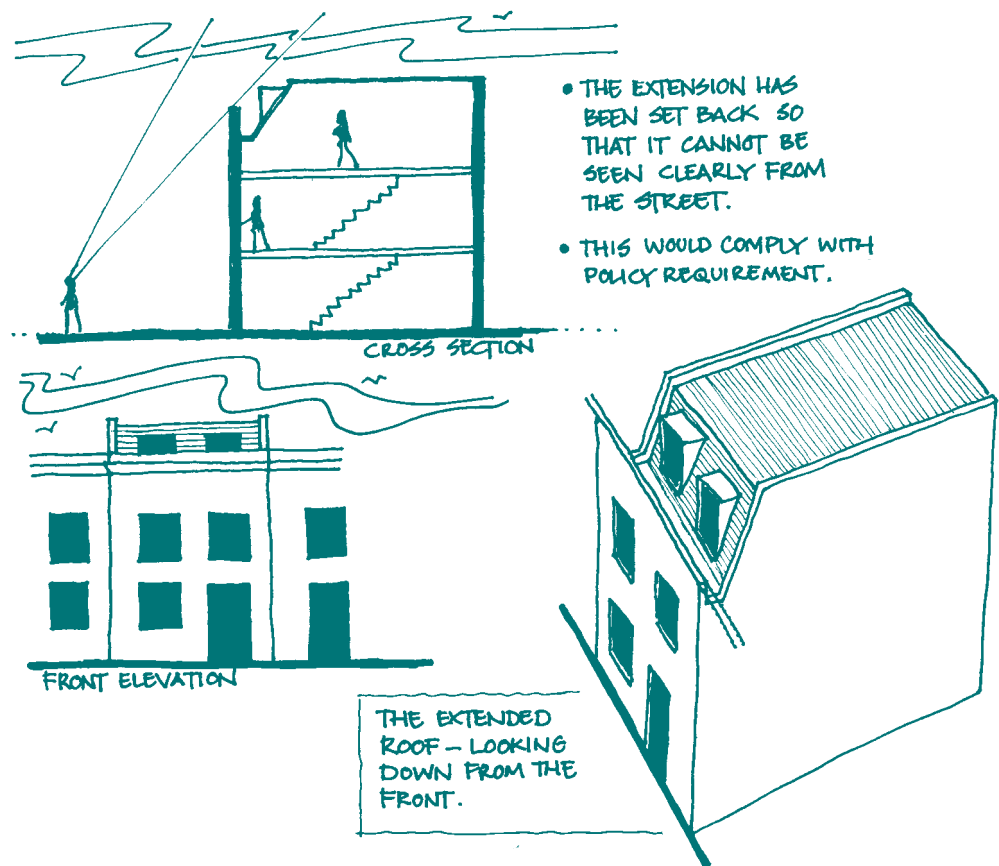
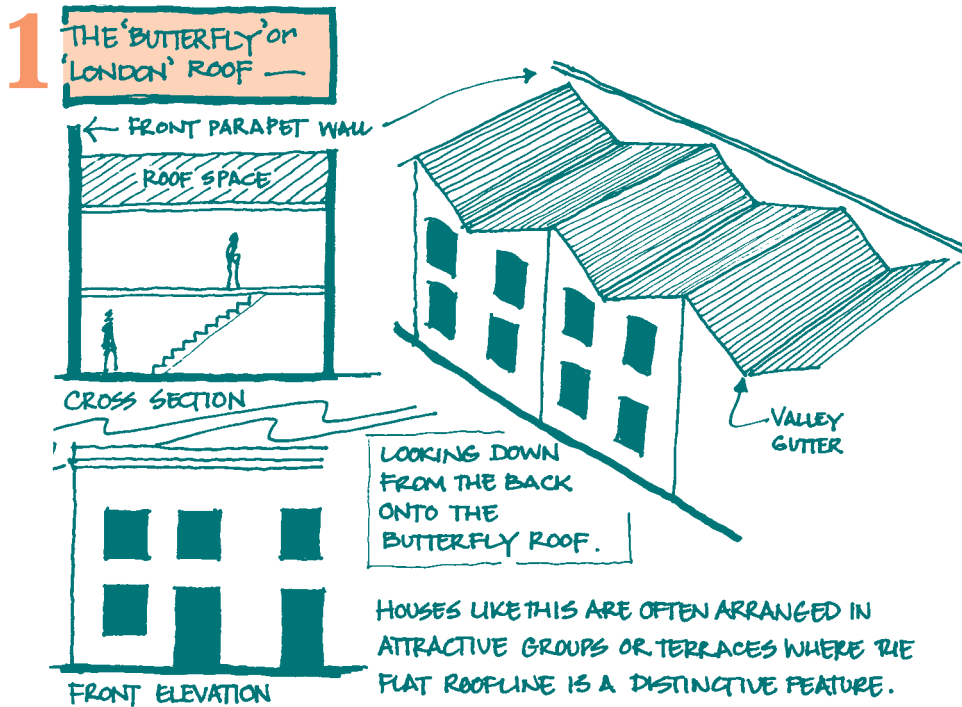
10 What sort of roof have you got?

The sketches below show some typical roof types and explain how to avoid planning problems and design a successful loft conversion.

These sketches show what can be done but there may be reasons why you cannot do what is shown here.

For instance

- where the roofs are a fine feature of the area, especially in a conservation area - see page 6 or
- where the extension would be particularly prominent and look out of place eg. on a corner house - see page 4



2

THE HIPPED ROOF

- THE HOUSE ON THE LEFT HAS A STEEPLY PITCHED ROOF WHICH OFFERS GREATER POTENTIAL FOR A SUCCESSFUL LOFT CONVERSION.



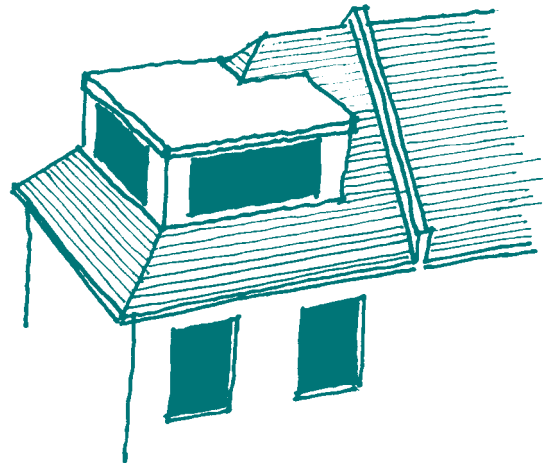
- THE SHALLOW PITCH (RIGHT) HAS MUCH MORE LIMITED POTENTIAL



... THIS SORT OF INSENSITIVE EXTENSION FAILS TO MEET PLANNING POLICY REQUIREMENTS AND WILL BE RESISTED.

- DO NOT EXTEND ACROSS THE HIP OF THE ROOF

A CRUDE 'BOX' IMPOSED ON THE ROOF DOMINATES THE BUILDING AND SPOILS ITS APPEARANCE



VIEW FROM THE BACK

- YOU COULD CONSIDER

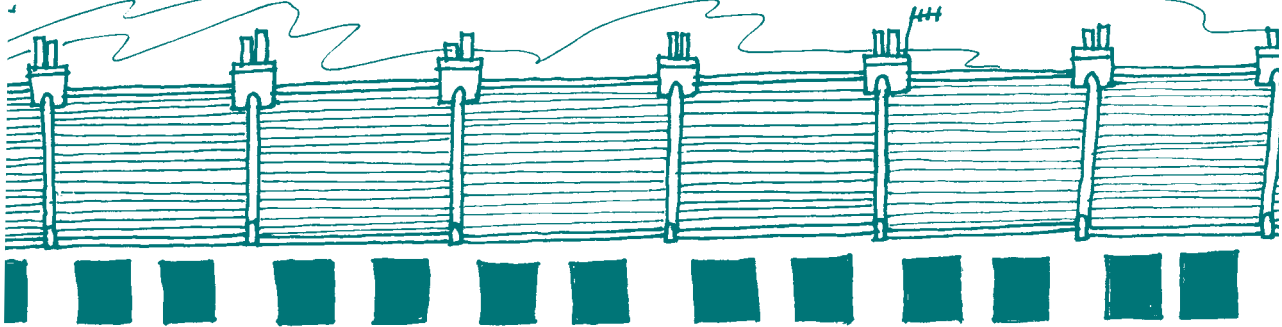


- THIS WOULD BE A MORE SYMPATHETIC APPROACH BUT EVEN THIS MAY NOT BE RIGHT — SEE QUESTIONS 2 & 6



TURNING THE HIP INTO A GABLE MAY WORK BUT YOU MUST CONSIDER VERY CAREFULLY HOW THIS WOULD AFFECT THE LOOK OF YOUR HOUSE AND THE GROUP (AGAIN, LOOK AT QUESTION 6)

3 THE PITCHED ROOF ON THE STANDARD TERRACED HOUSE



← YOU WILL NEED A RESCUE WINDOW AT THE FRONT BUT THIS CAN BE IN THE ROOFSLOPE.

- ON A GROUP OF TERRACED HOUSES DORMER WINDOWS ON THE FRONT ROOF SLOPE CAN LOOK QUITE OUT OF PLACE.
- THE ADVICE IN POLICY IS TO AVOID EXTENSIONS AND DORMERS AT THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE.

BUT AT THE BACK....



.....ON A MID TERRACED HOUSE A SUBSTANTIAL EXTENSION IS POSSIBLE.

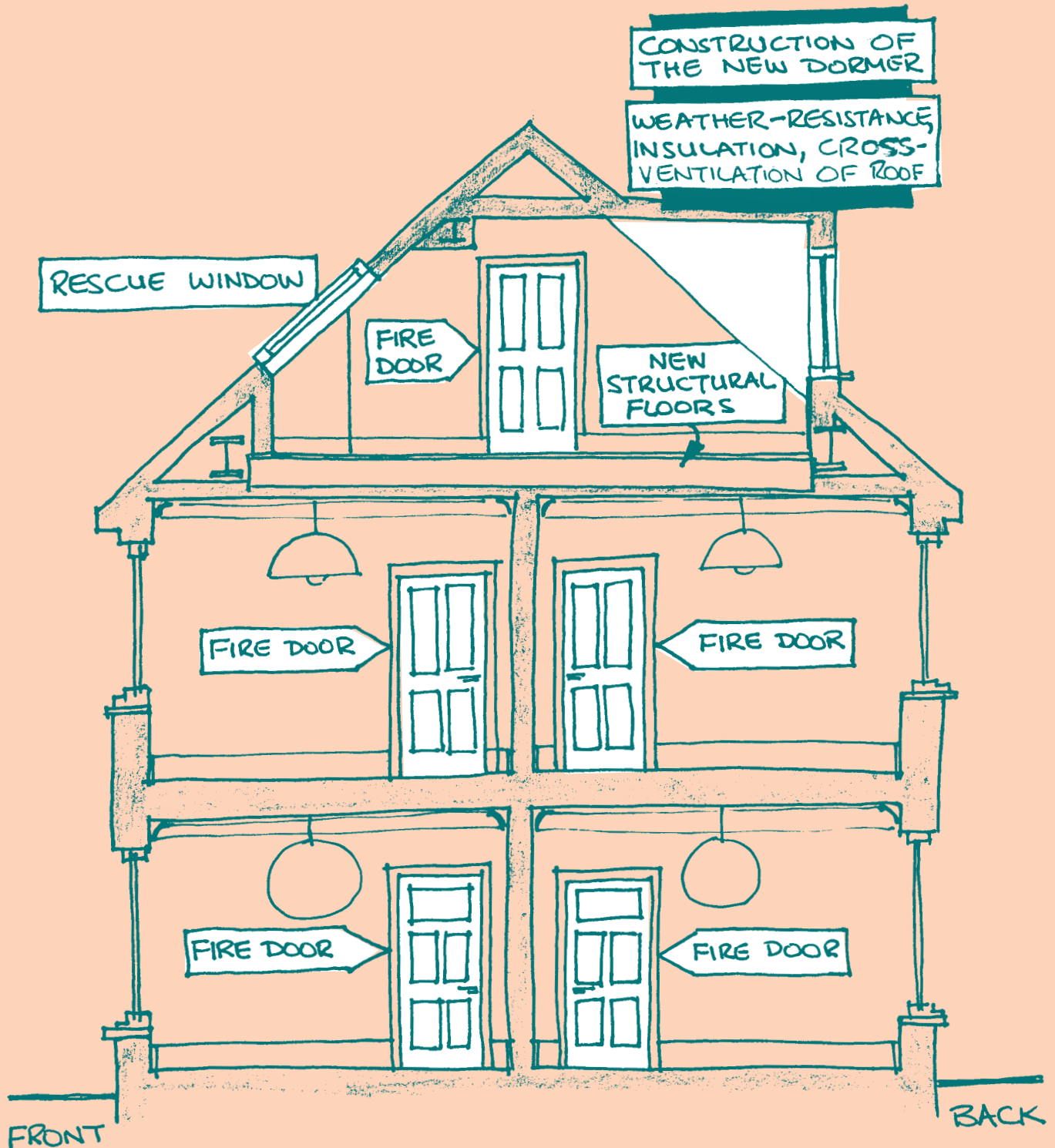


- IDEALLY SMALL WELL PLACED DORMERS (RIGHT) ARE MUCH BETTER THAN THE OVERSIZED 'BOX' EXTENSION (LEFT).



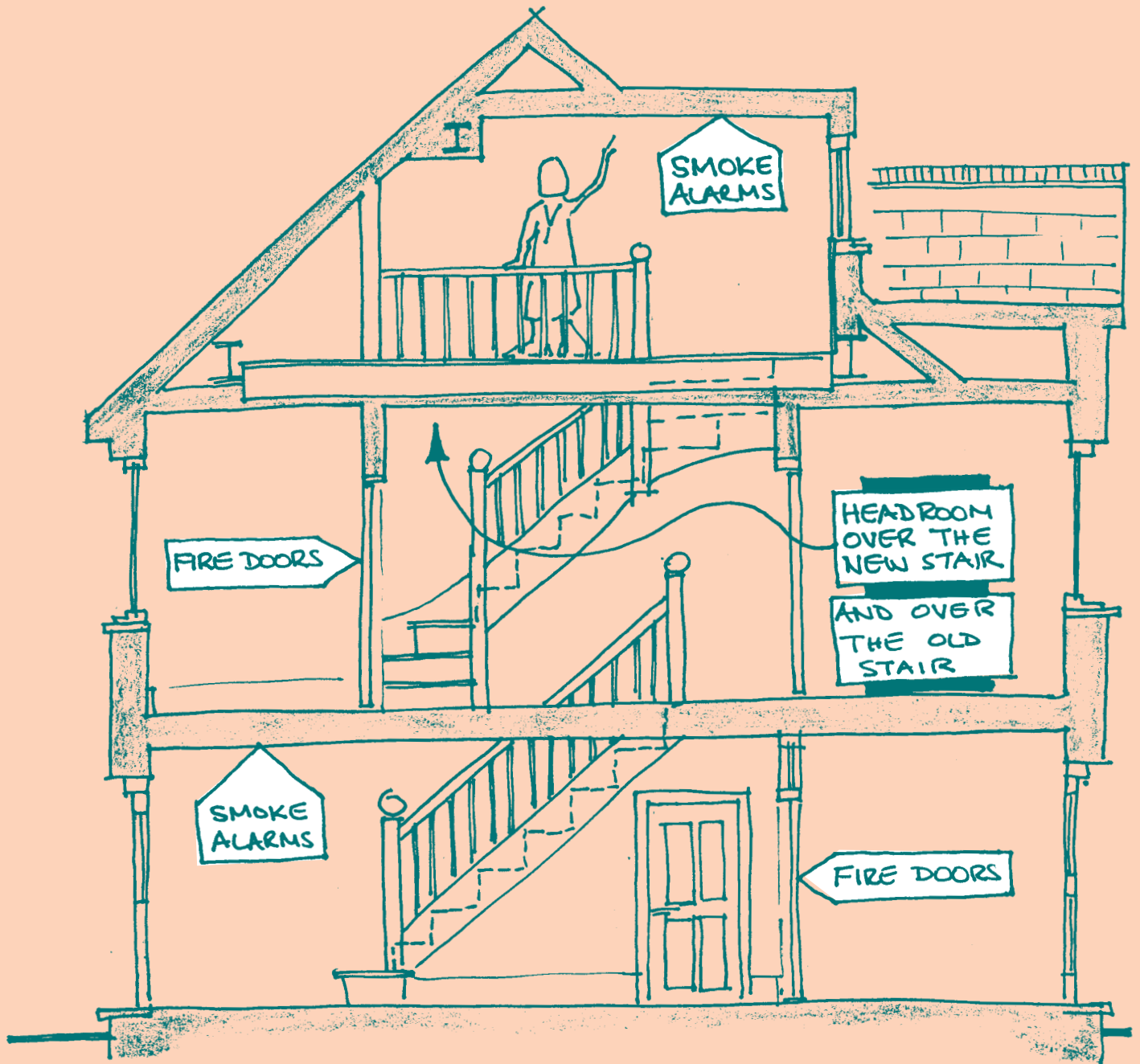
The Building Regulations

Points to watch



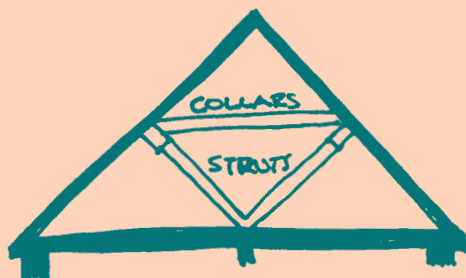
LOFT CONVERSIONS

Points to watch



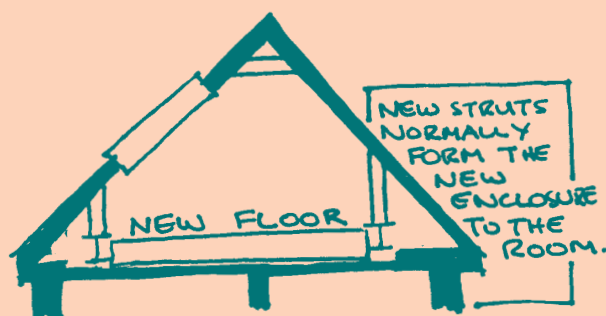
LOFT CONVERSIONS

Points to watch



TO MAKE THE BEST USE OF YOUR LOFT SPACE, YOU MIGHT WANT TO REMOVE THE ROOF STRUTS AND COLLARS.....

WHICH ARE THE SUPPORTS FOR THE RAFTERS AND ROOF TILES



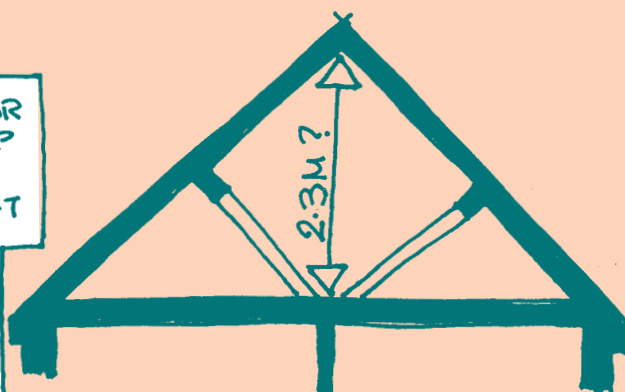
AND THE OLD CEILING JOISTS WHICH YOU'VE STORED THINGS ON FOR YEARS.....

WON'T BE BIG ENOUGH TO SUPPORT A NEW FLOOR!

REMEMBER!

WHEN THE NEW FLOOR GOES IN, IT TAKES UP TO 175 MM OF THE HEIGHT OF THE LOFT

THE CEILING-HEIGHT OF A SUCCESSFUL LOFT CONVERSION WOULD BE AT LEAST 2.1M SO YOU WILL NEED ABOUT 2.3M IN THE OLD LOFT SPACE

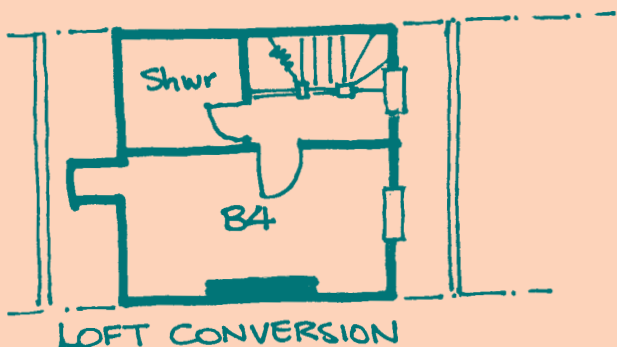
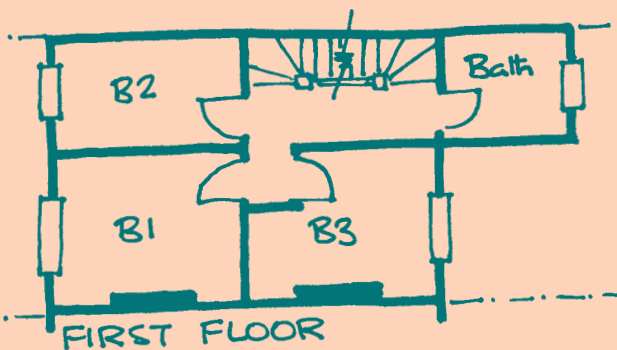
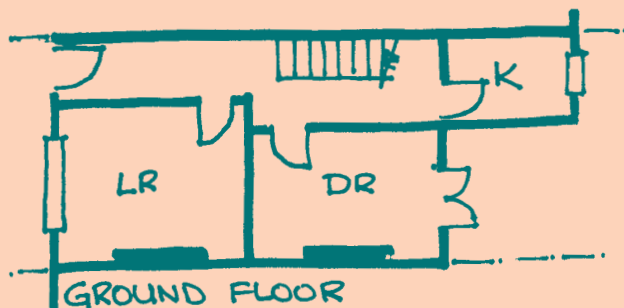


TO ACHIEVE A SATISFACTORY FIRE RESISTANCE, IT IS LIKELY THAT LATH-AND-PLASTER CEILINGS WILL HAVE TO BE REPLACED OR UPGRADED

THE NEW FLOOR

Points to watch

A FULL STAIRCASE ENCLOSURE FROM THE NEW LOFT ROOMS DOWN TO THE FRONT DOOR PROVIDES AN ESCAPE ROUTE SHOULD A FIRE START.....



USUALLY, THIS IS ALREADY PARTLY IN PLACE

AND IS FORMED BY THE HALLWAY AND LANDING

SO, THE ONLY ADDITIONAL WALLS NEEDED ARE THOSE IN THE NEW LOFT, AROUND THE NEW STAIRCASE

THE NEW WALLS SHOULD BE BUILT TO 1/2 HOUR FIRE RESISTANT STANDARD

IN THIS EXAMPLE, TYPICAL OF MANY LOFT CONVERSIONS

SPACE AT THE FRONT OF THE NEW STAIRS COULD BE USED AS A SMALL SHOWER-WC

STAIRCASE ENCLOSURE

Points to watch



FIRE RESISTING DOORS ARE VITAL TO CONTAIN SMOKE AND FIRE IN A ROOM FOR SUFFICIENT TIME FOR YOU TO BECOME AWARE OF THE FIRE AND EVACUATE THE BUILDING

THERE MUST BE A 1/2 HOUR FIRE-RESISTANT PARTITION TO SEPARATE THE LANDING FROM THE ROOMS IN THE NEW LOFT CONVERSION

THE DOORS IN THE LOFT CONVERSION MUST BE 1/2 HOUR FIRE CHECK DOORS AND BE FITTED WITH A DOOR CLOSER.....

SAFETY  FIRST

GENERALLY, THE EXISTING DOORS OFF THE HALLWAY AND LANDING WILL GIVE SUFFICIENT FIRE RESISTANCE, BUT WILL HAVE TO BE FITTED WITH A DOOR CLOSER.....

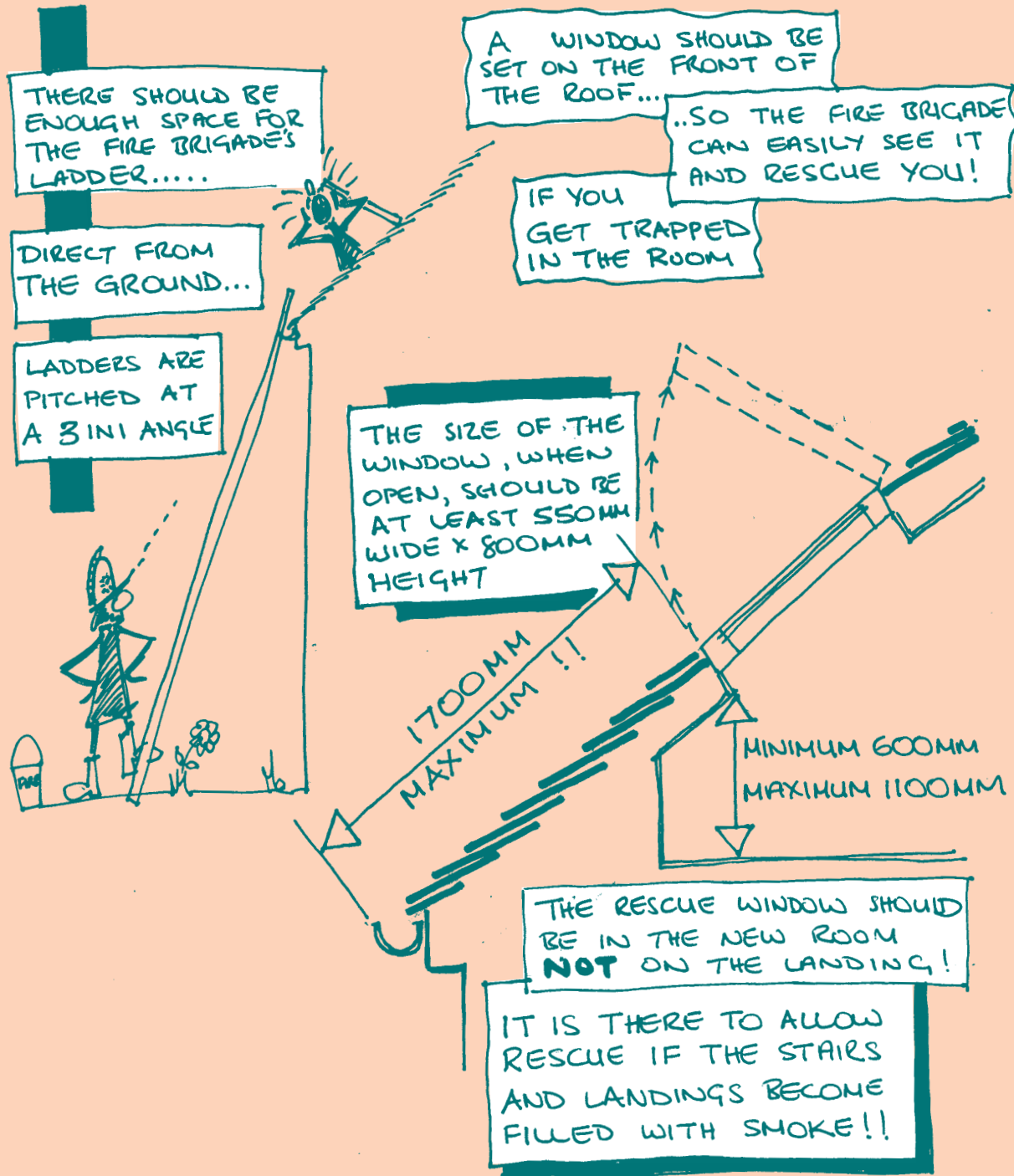
REMEMBER!
A FIRE CHECK DOOR CANNOT WORK UNLESS IT IS CLOSED!

ANY GLASS IN FANLIGHTS OR IN THE DOOR NEEDS REPLACING WITH WIRED OR LAMINATED GLASS!



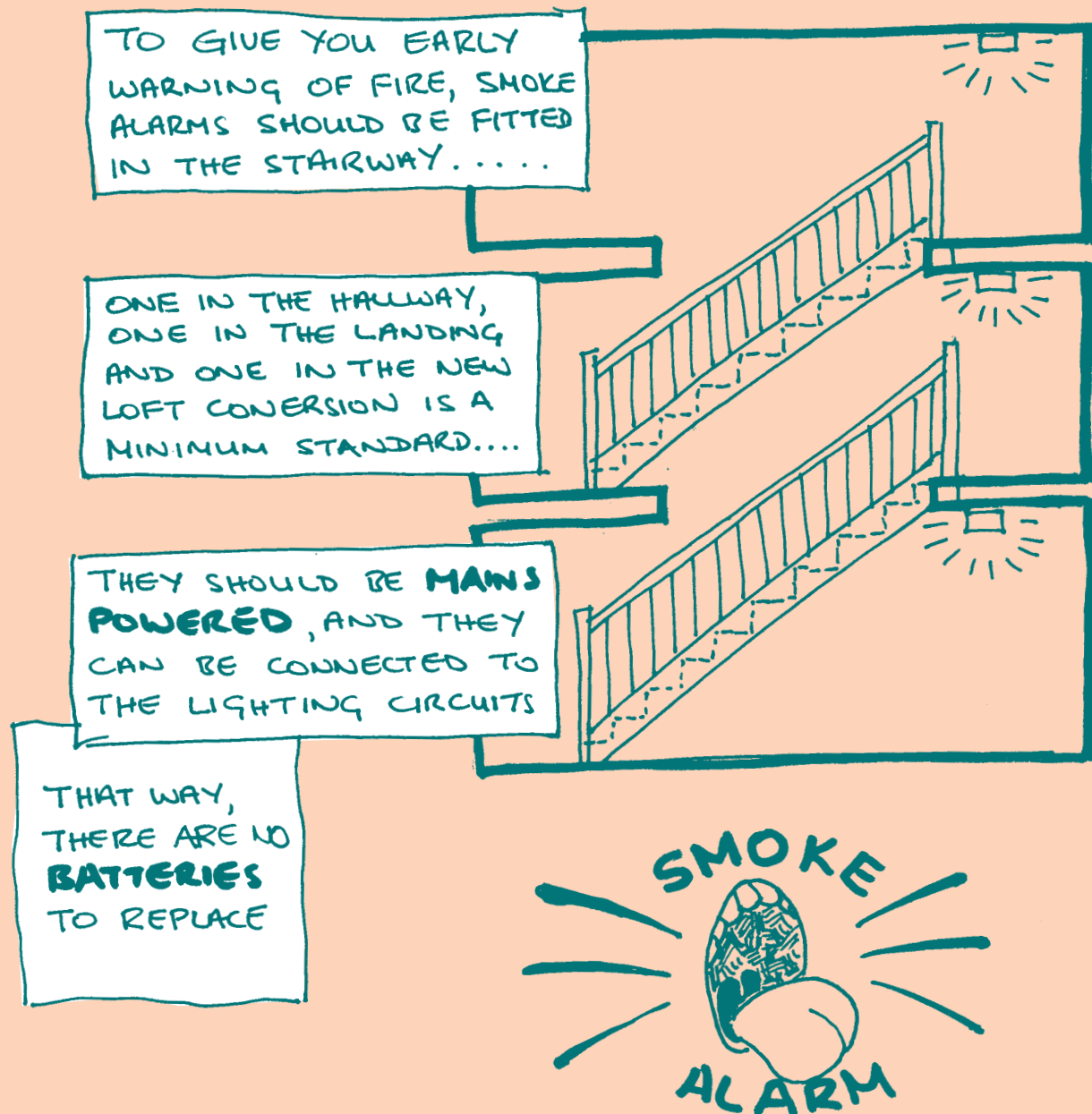
FIRE DOORS

Points to watch



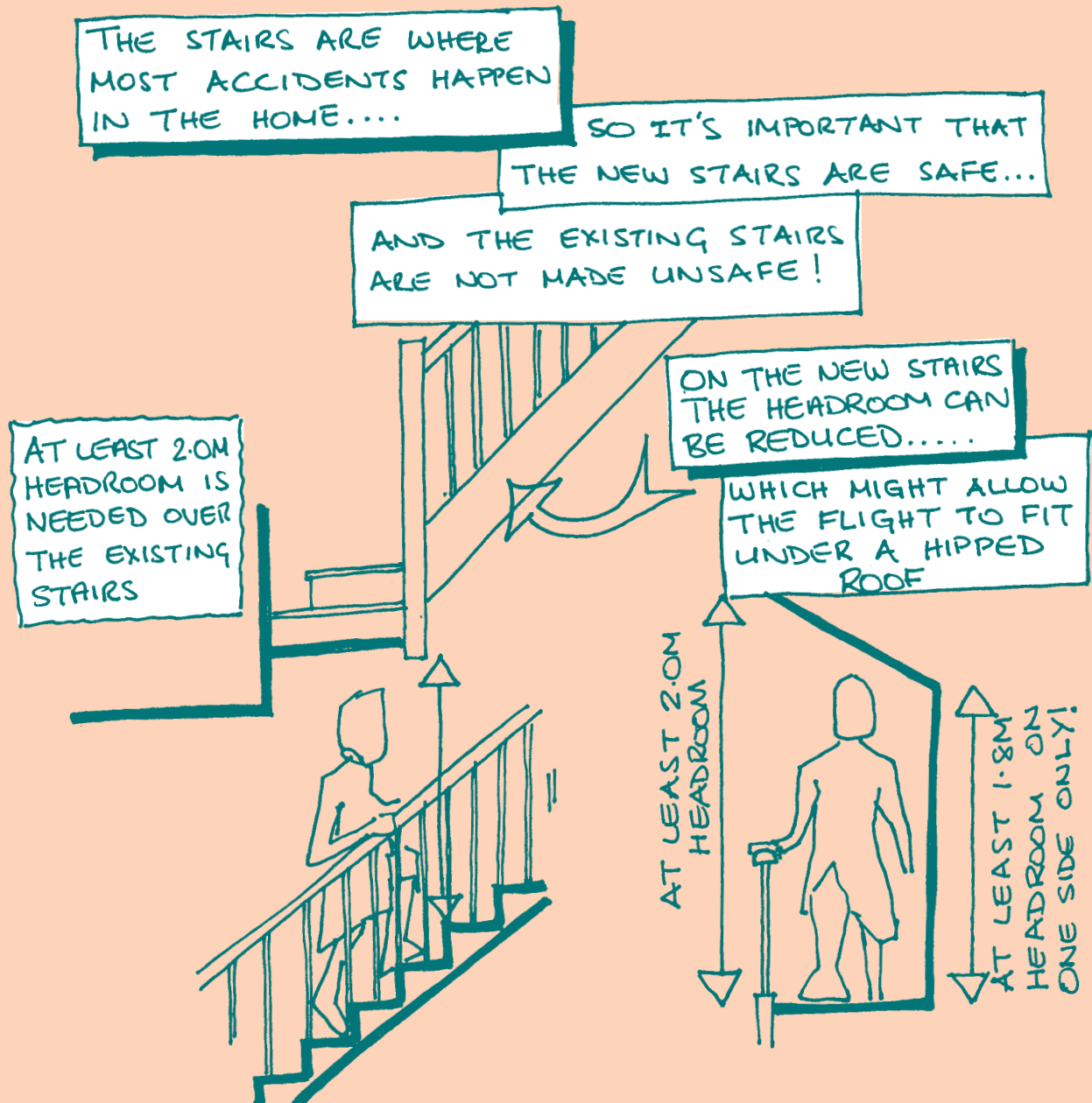
RESCUE WINDOWS

Points to watch



SMOKE ALARMS

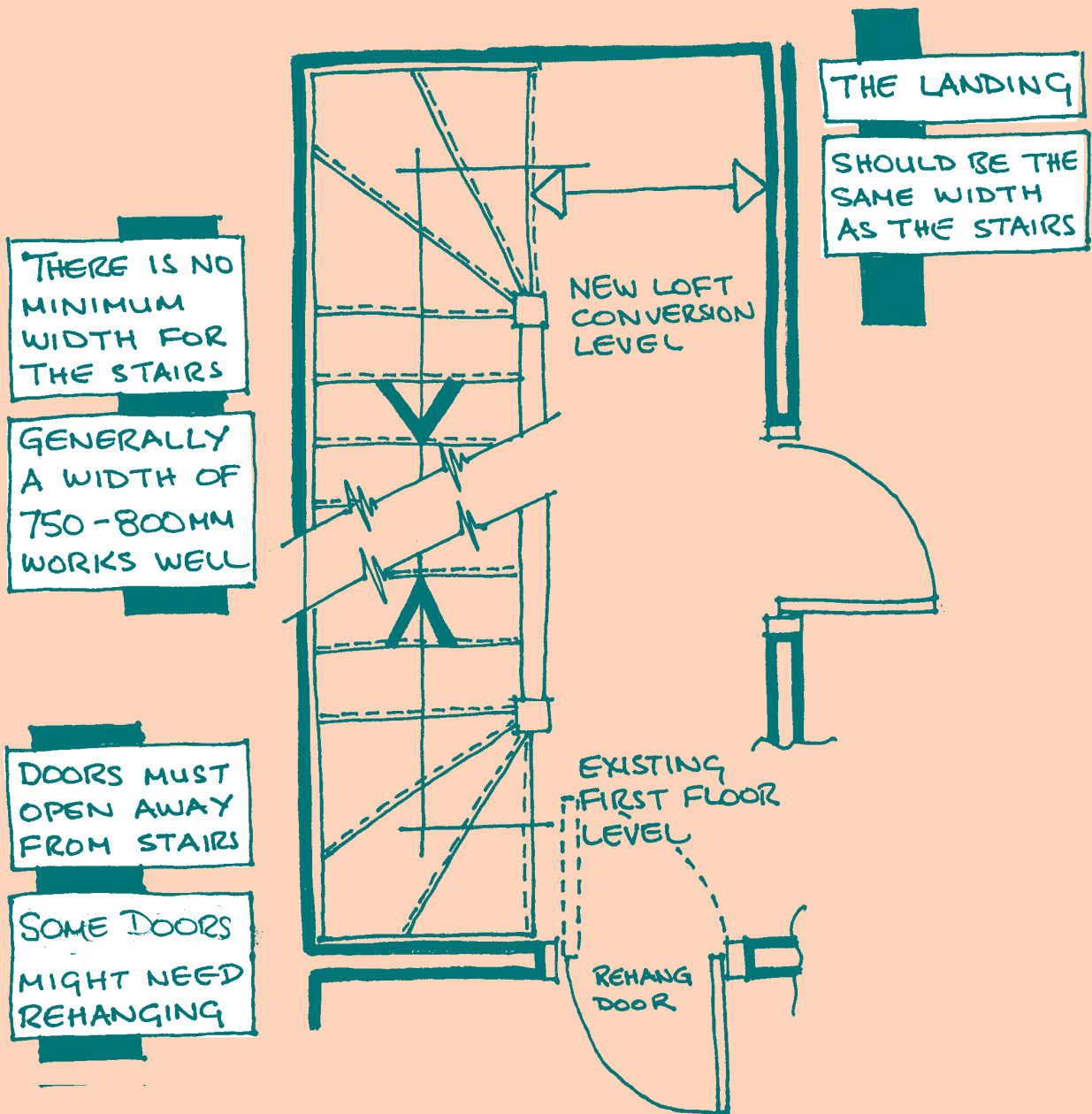
Points to watch



STAIRCASES

Points to watch

THIS IS A TYPICAL STAIRCASE PLAN BUT THERE ARE MANY VARIATIONS!

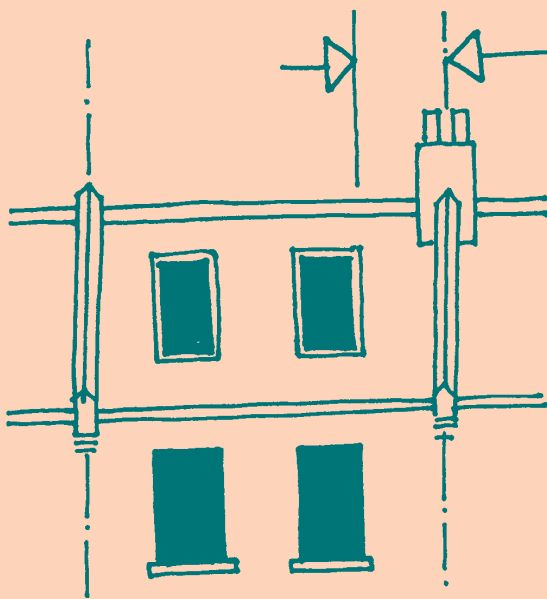


STAIRCASES

2

Points to watch

A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS APPLY TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF DORMERS



IF THE DORMER IS LESS THAN 1.0M FROM THE PARTY WALL

THE SIDE OF THE DORMER MUST PROVIDE 1/2 HOUR FIRE RESISTANCE FROM BOTH SIDES

IN OTHER WORDS, THE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE CONSTRUCTIONS MUST **EACH** PROVIDE 1/2 HOUR FIRE RESISTANCE.

IF YOU ARE PLANNING A MANSARD WHERE THE PARTY WALLS WILL BE EXTENDED, YOU MUST OBTAIN THE AGREEMENT OF YOUR NEIGHBOURS

REMEMBER!

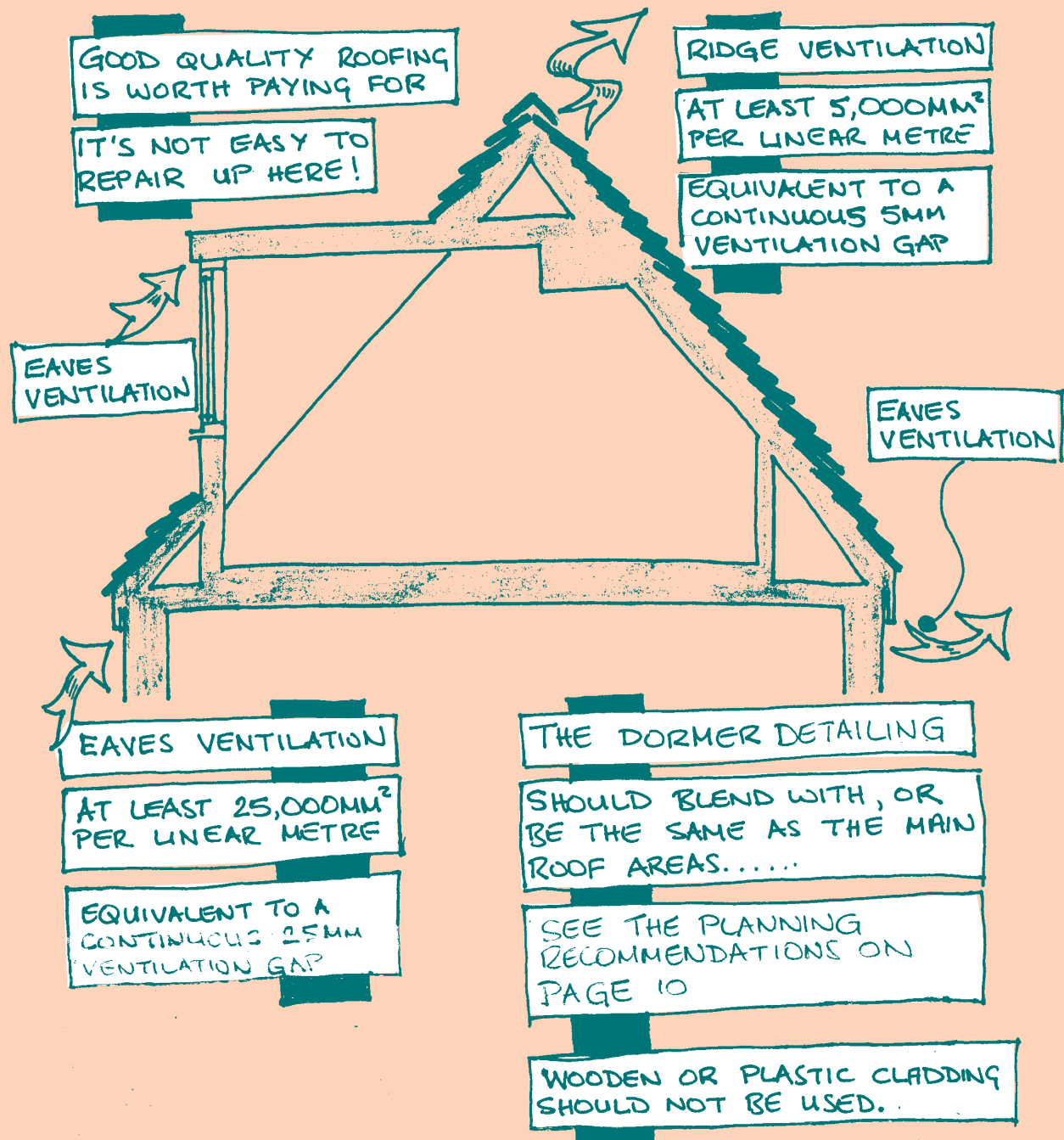
THE PARTY WALLS ARE JOINTLY OWNED BY YOU AND YOUR NEIGHBOURS. YOU SHOULD OBTAIN WRITTEN CONSENT FROM THEM!



THE NEW DORMER

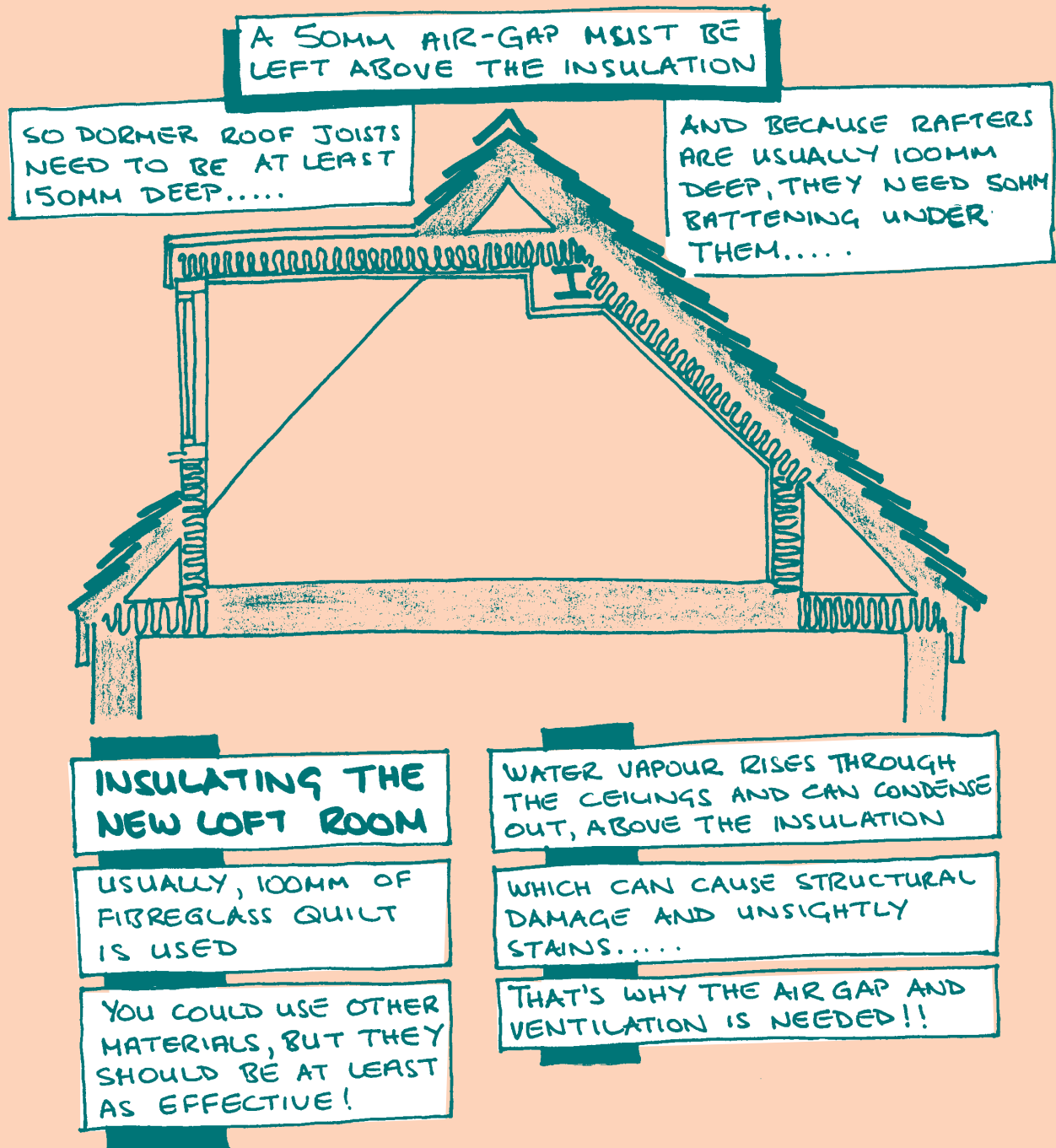
1

Points to watch



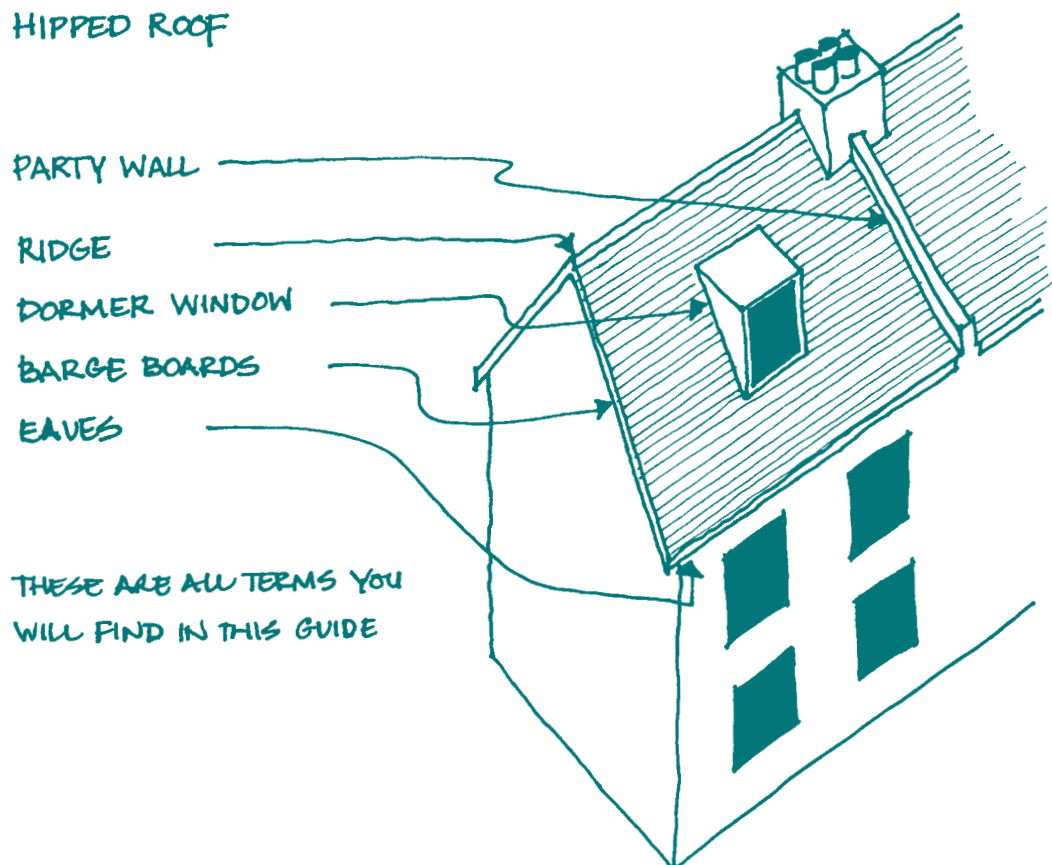
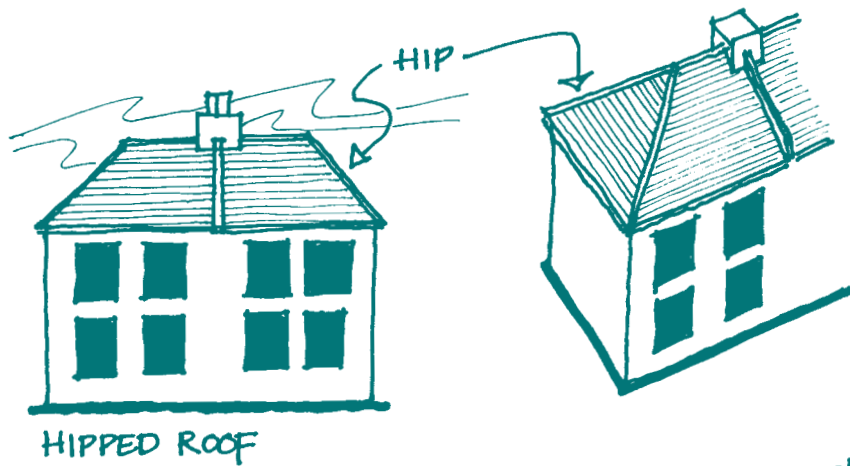
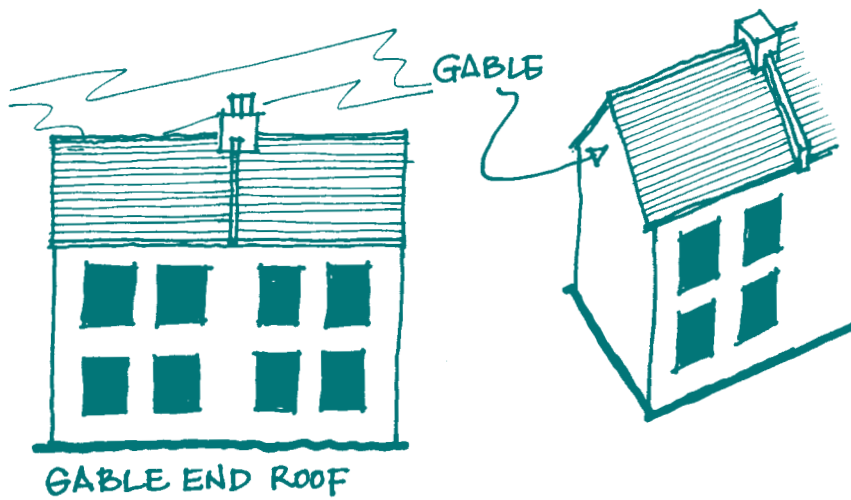
THE NEW DORMER

Points to watch



THE NEW DORMER

Roofs - terms and components

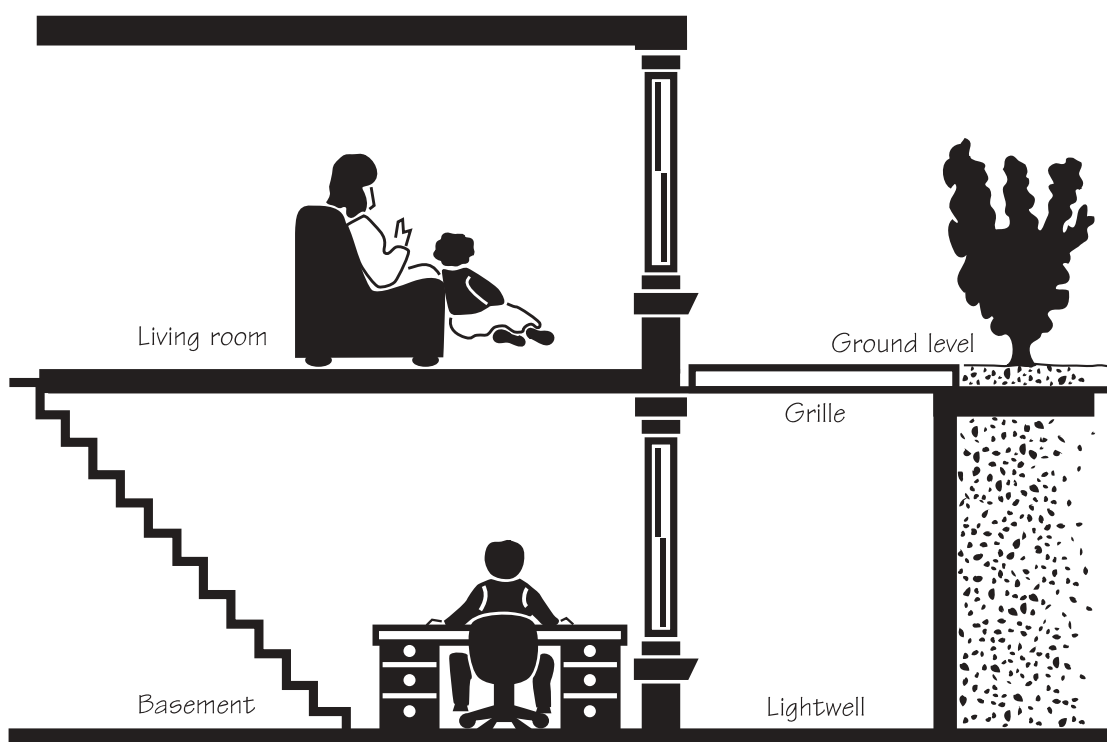






Designed and produced by the Corporate Communications Unit
Wandsworth Council
DP 175 (rev.10.00)

Supplementary Planning Guidance on **Residential Basement Extensions**



Wandsworth Unitary Development Plan
non-statutory supplementary planning guidance

December 2003



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status of supplementary planning guidance

The guidance supplements the application of relevant policies in the adopted Wandsworth Unitary Development Plan and is a material consideration in deciding planning applications in line with Government Guidance in PPG12 (Development Plans - December 1999) paragraphs 3.15-3.17.

This supplementary planning guidance was approved by the Council on 14 February 2002 following public consultation. Appendix 2 describes the result of consultation and the Council's response.

introduction

what the guidance covers

- 1** This guidance is aimed primarily at householders who are considering converting an existing cellar into habitable accommodation, or excavating a new basement, to use in conjunction with the house above or the ground-floor flat. It sets out the main considerations that you, your architect, and your builder will need to take into account in planning a basement extension, and explains the Council's planning policies and other statutory requirements.

summary of controls involved

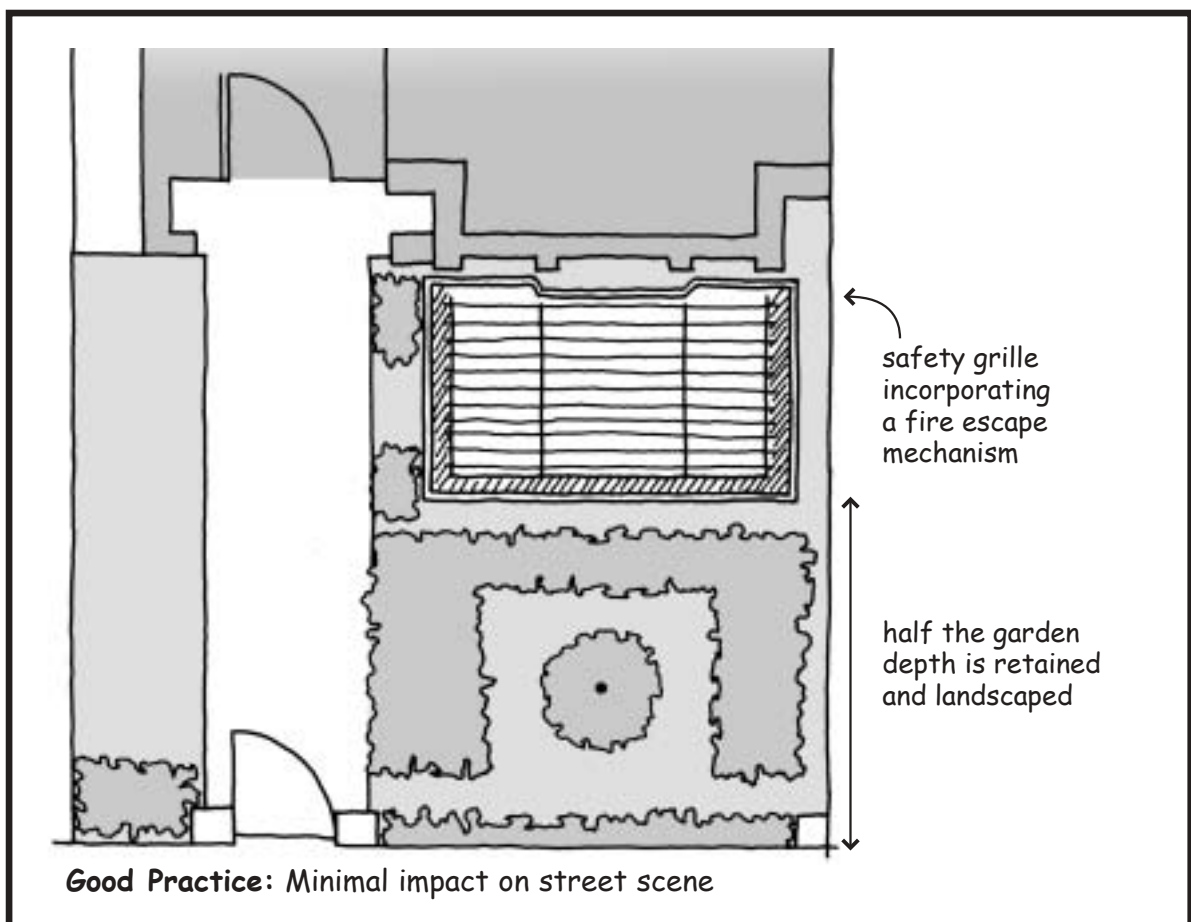
- 2 **Planning permission.** You will not normally need planning permission to use an existing cellar in conjunction with the house or flat above. If the property is a single house (as opposed to flats) you may also be able to enlarge a cellar without planning permission. However, if the house has already been extended, or if you live in a flat or maisonette, you will need planning permission for this. You will also need planning permission to excavate or enlarge a lightwell at the front of the house (and also in some cases at the side or rear). You would also need planning permission to use the basement as a separate dwelling. If you are in any doubt, it is best to check with the Planning Service first.
- 3 **Building control approval.** You will need building control approval for the excavation or enlargement of a basement. The work must meet the requirements of the Building Regulations, and habitable accommodation must also meet the fitness standards set by the Housing Act 1985.
- 4 **Highway licence.** You will need a license under the Highways Act for any activities on the highway, such as the parking of skips, the transfer of spoil, or erection of hoardings. You would also need the consent of the appropriate highway authority if your proposal involved any work under any part of the highway (including the footway). For most streets in the Borough the Council is the highway authority. The Council will also be able to let you know if you live on a main road which is now the responsibility of Transport for London.
- 5 **Party wall agreement.** You will usually need a party wall agreement with your neighbour(s). The Council is not itself involved in party wall agreements, although it has produced a leaflet explaining the procedures.

additional space for an existing dwelling or creating a new basement flat?

- 6 If you propose to create a new flat in the basement, separate from the rest of the building, additional considerations will apply. The Council has policies in its Unitary Development Plan (UDP) covering the minimum size of flats and the number that can be created in a house. The Council would also take into account whether a new flat would have adequate privacy and an acceptable outlook. The UDP is available on the Council's web site www.wandsworth.gov.uk. You should consult the Planning Service at an early stage to check whether the creation of an additional dwelling is likely to be acceptable.

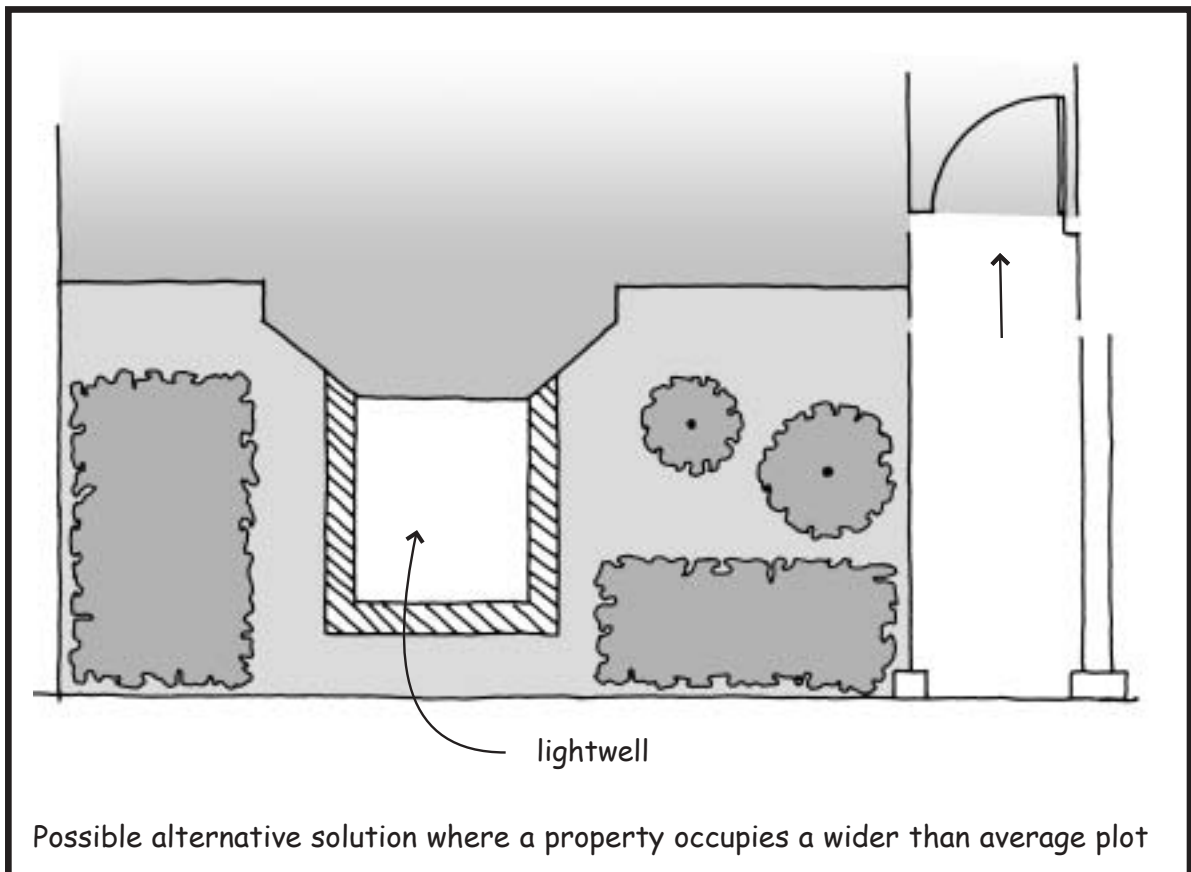
design considerations

- 7 Basements or semi-basements are an established feature of houses in some parts of the Borough, and in some streets lightwells occupy part or all of the space between the house and the footway. Most streets in the Borough, however, retain traditional front gardens, although many houses have cellars under at least part of the house. In streets where basements and lightwells are not a traditional feature, the excavation of a basement can have a significant impact on the appearance of the house and the street scene, both by enlarging the front elevation of the house itself and because part of the front garden may need to be removed to provide a lightwell.
- 8 Where basements are not a characteristic feature, it is particularly important to ensure that any new one is not so prominent as to dominate the front elevation of the house, and that the front garden is not dominated by a lightwell. The depth of the garden will affect the impact on the street scene. In a relatively long front garden, a lightwell is unlikely to be intrusive, and the basement accommodation will remain partly hidden from the street. On the other hand, a shallow front garden could be mostly or entirely lost to a new lightwell. This is unlikely to be acceptable in streets where this is not the traditional pattern. In many locations in Wandsworth, however, a basement may be achievable, but particular care needs to be taken to make sure that the scale and design fit in with the property and the street scene.



design considerations

- 9 The Council's Unitary Development Plan states (paragraph 159) that **"where lightwells are excavated at the front of houses to provide light to basements, at least half of the front garden depth should remain"**. This provides a general guideline to ensure that the lightwell does not dominate the front garden. In other words, the depth of the garden remaining at street/ground floor level (measured back from the boundary) should be at least as great as that of the excavated lightwell. In addition, policy H4(b) requires that **"adequate amenity space is left and garden setting is preserved after extending...."** The overall objective is to ensure that the alterations to the property are not unduly incongruous or intrusive. In appropriate circumstances, there may be scope for flexibility, for example where dictated by an established pattern of lightwells, or an unusual layout, such as a wider than usual plot.



design considerations

- 10** The Council's general policy on the design of alterations to residential properties applies to basement conversions. The Unitary Development Plan states (policy H4) that **"extensions and other alterations will be permitted if: (a) the scale, design and external materials are in keeping with the character of the building, adjoining properties and the surrounding area...."** The design of the front of a new basement should relate to the original building. In particular the size, position and design of windows should be dictated by those in the remainder of the front of the house. They should not necessarily be as large as those in the existing ground floor, nor aligned with them, as the basement accommodation is likely to be less grand than the ground floor with lower headroom. In any case, large picture windows or French windows are likely to look incongruous and should be avoided.
- 11** Construction of basements may involve an array of equipment and other features (referred to elsewhere in these guidelines), such as guard-railing, drainage and anti-flood equipment, skylights, fire escapes, etc. These can be intrusive features, adding clutter to the front garden. Cumulatively, they may have an unacceptable impact on the appearance of a property and the street scene generally. If they are necessary, their location, design and, possibly, screening should be considered at the outset and not as an after-thought, so that they can be fully taken into account at the planning stage.
- 12** An important consideration is the need to protect people, especially children, from falling into a lightwell. A drop of 600mm or more should be protected. Railings (1100mm high) can provide such protection, while allowing light to penetrate. However, in small gardens they can be an intrusive feature, competing for attention with the boundary wall at the front of the property. A horizontal grille over the lightwell can provide a less intrusive alternative and has the advantage of providing additional security. To provide access for maintenance and/or a means of escape, part of the grille would have to be openable, and possibly counterbalanced. Any such mechanism should be as unobtrusive as possible.
- 13** One possible approach is to roof over the lightwell to provide additional accommodation. However, skylights would need to be inserted to light the basement, and you would need to ensure that adequate arrangements are made for ventilation and possibly fire escape (see below). The structure needed to cover a lightwell can be particularly intrusive, and may not be acceptable in small gardens and other sensitive locations.

design considerations

- 14** In order to minimise the impact of a new basement, it is important that the remaining front garden is well landscaped, and that the boundary wall or fence is retained or re-instated. If you live in a flat and share the front garden, you will need the agreement of the other owners to the necessary works, and it will be important to agree with them how the remaining garden is to be re-instated and maintained.
- 15** This guidance applies throughout the Borough. If you live in a conservation area, however, it will be particularly important to respect the character and appearance of the area. Some houses in the Borough are listed as of architectural or historic interest, and these buildings are particularly sensitive to alterations that might affect their character. The Conservation and Design Group of the Planning Service can advise you further on conservation areas and listed buildings.

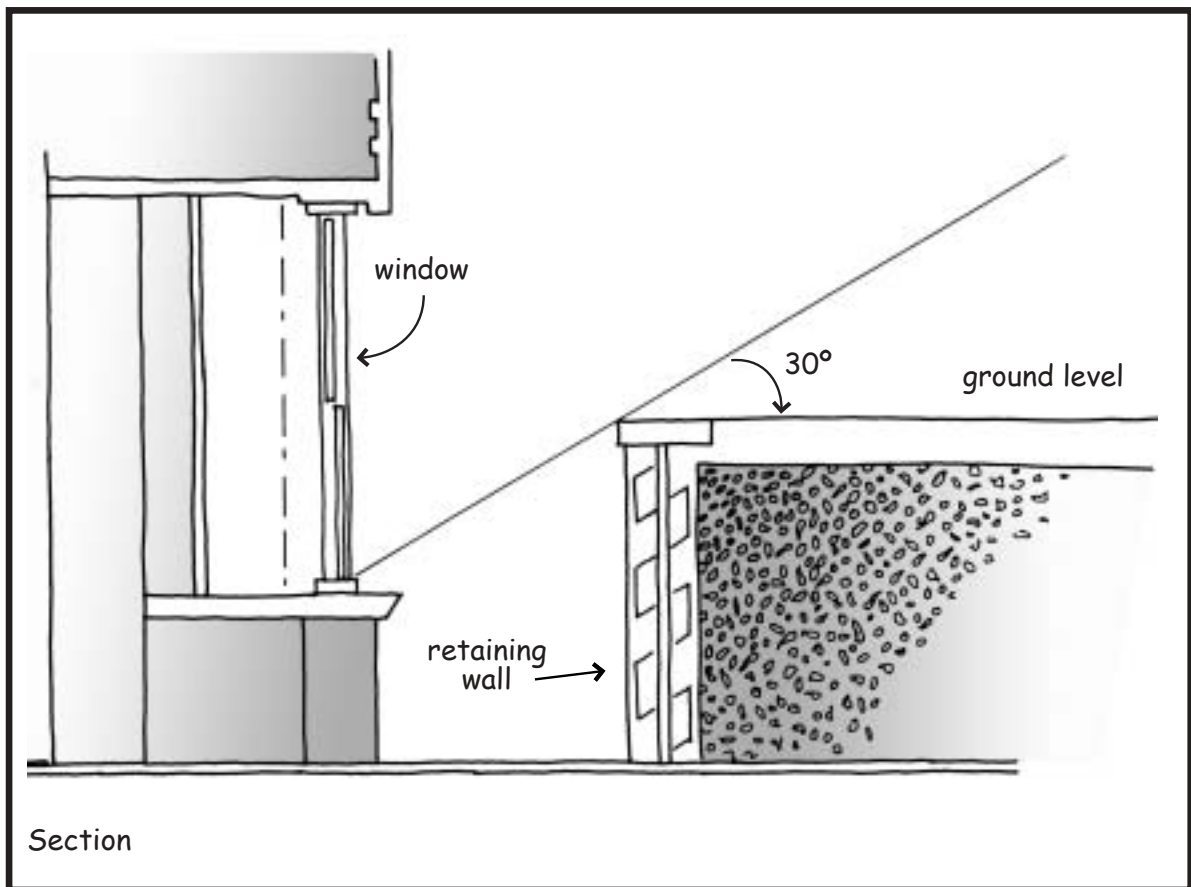
headroom

- 16** The depth of excavation needed to provide sufficient headroom is an important cost consideration. The headroom that you will need to plan for will depend on the way in which the basement is to be used. There is no statutory minimum requirement for ceiling heights, although the staircase should provide 2.0m headroom. It is, nevertheless, generally recommended that residential accommodation should have a minimum ceiling height of 2.15m where possible.

lighting

- 17** The Council's Unitary Development Plan (paragraph 153) states that **"additional habitable floorspace should have satisfactory daylight and sunlight"**. The levels that can be achieved will depend, in part, on the layout of rooms in the basement, the orientation of the property, and the position of nearby buildings. To meet the fitness standard in the Housing Act 1985 and avoid the need to rely on artificial lighting in normal daylight hours, habitable rooms should have natural lighting with windows or glazed doors equal to 10% of the floor area. Any solid obstruction, such as a wall, within 3m of the window, which would prevent light reaching this glazed area at an angle of 30° from the horizontal, should be avoided. This will affect the size and design of the lightwell.

lighting



ventilation

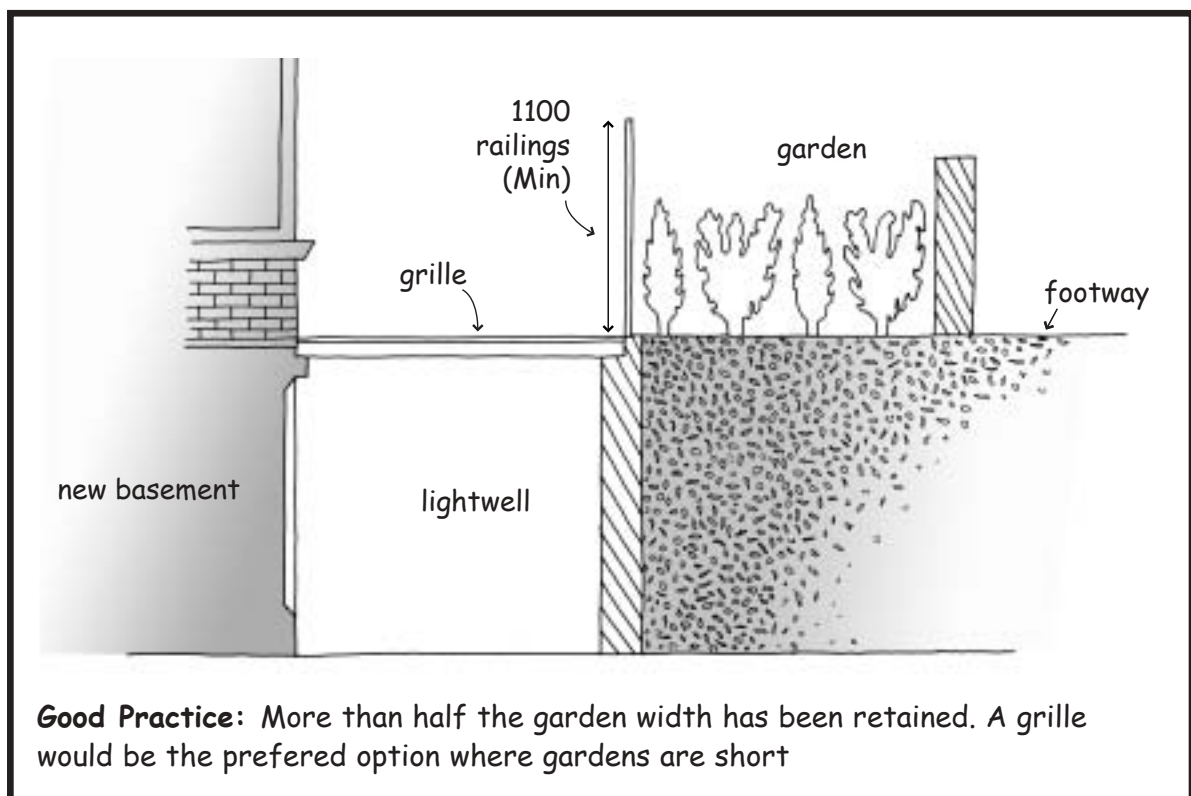
- 18** Half of the minimum glazed area (i.e. equivalent to 5% of the floor area) should be openable, with the top of the opening being at least 1.75m above the floor. Alternative arrangements will need to be made to ventilate a basement where the lightwell is roofed over. In any event, if a kitchen or bathroom is installed in a basement, you will need to incorporate mechanical extract ventilation.

means of escape in case of fire

- 19** Basement rooms should each be provided either with a door or suitably sized window giving access to a place of safety leading to external ground level, or with a protected escape route within the dwelling leading to a final exit. Stairs or ladders, and associated gates in any guard railings around the lightwell should be designed to be as inconspicuous as possible.

structural considerations

- 20** The foundations adjoining a new basement will need to be underpinned, and this may also be necessary if you plan to lower the floor of an existing cellar. You will need a party wall agreement with your neighbour(s) covering this. You will need to pay for any professional advice that your neighbour(s) employ on this.
- 21** A lightwell will need to be enclosed by a retaining wall. The size and structural design of this wall should be considered at the planning stage, as this will dictate the extent to which the wall will encroach on the remaining garden space and, therefore, on whether the lightwell is likely to be acceptable in planning terms.
- 22** If any retaining wall will be situated at or near the back edge of the pavement, it must be designed so as to provide adequate support for the adjacent highway.



- 23** The basement walls and floors and the lightwell should be designed to be capable of withstanding $\frac{2}{3}$ storey height of water pressure.
- 24** The basement ceiling must provide $\frac{1}{2}$ hour fire resistance in the case of a dwelling house, or 1 hour resistance if the building consists of flats. The basement must also be separated from the remainder of the house by means of a $\frac{1}{2}$ hour fire-resisting partition including the access door.

underground services

- 25 You will need to establish whether any water mains or supply pipes, electricity cables, or gas pipes will need to be relocated. You should consult the utility companies to check if any of their services or equipment would be affected by excavation.

drainage

- 26 You should establish the position and level of any drains or sewers before work starts, as you may need to move or lower existing drains. Any alteration to the route or level of existing drains may require approval by your neighbours and/or Thames Water.
- 27 If the drains are well below the level of the floor of the proposed basement, then conventional drainage can probably be used for any bathroom or kitchen in the basement. If, however, the waste needs to be raised from the basement, or if you need to lower existing drains under the house below the level of the sewer, you will need to install a macerator and pump. This should be regularly maintained.

damp and risk of flooding

- 28 The Council's Unitary Development Plan (paragraph 153) states that **"new habitable rooms should not be created in basements in areas subject to flooding"**. Habitable rooms include living rooms and bedrooms.
- 29 In some areas, cellars are vulnerable to groundwater seeping up through the structure, and this may be severe enough to cause flooding. Groundwater levels in London are rising. A basement to be used as living accommodation must be free from damp and, because it will be below ground, normal methods of damp-proofing will not usually work, and external tanking or other specialist waterproofing methods will need to be adopted. If you have an existing problem with water, you should check first that it is groundwater and not a leaking drain.

damp and risk of flooding

- 30 The Council's Unitary Development Plan (policy RDP10(a)) states that **"Development will not be permitted if: (a) it would be liable to risk of flooding unless it is accompanied by satisfactory mitigating measures..."**. Flooding of underground accommodation can arise from overflowing of drains or nearby watercourses, particularly during periods of exceptionally heavy rain and where the capacity of the sewers is limited, or the drainage infrastructure damaged. Where there is a significant risk of flooding, basements should not be used as sleeping accommodation. You may also need to consider measures to minimise any damage, for example to electrical circuits, that could arise from flash flooding. In locations where flooding has occurred regularly in the past, some basements had to be closed as habitable accommodation. The extent of this problem has been reduced by the completion of sewer relief schemes, and anti-flood valves can be installed to prevent foul water from entering the basement through the drains. A stainless steel non-return valve can be fitted in the last manhole before connecting to the main sewer. This valve requires greasing every year to ensure it does not stick. Thames Water can provide up-to-date advice on whether there is a known risk of flooding and whether an anti-flood valve should be fitted.

shared drainage

- 31 If you share your drainage with your neighbours, any equipment installed to prevent flooding will need to be accessible to them, as well as to Thames Water, in case it develops a fault.

construction issues

- 32 The construction of a basement is a substantial building project, involving excavation, the removal of spoil, concrete delivery and pouring, and the building work itself. The work should be planned to minimise nuisance to neighbours. As a general guideline, building operations audible at the site boundary should be confined to the hours of 07.30 to 18.00 (Mondays to Fridays) and 07.30 – 13.00 (Saturdays). The work can be particularly intrusive to your immediate neighbours, and you are advised to let them know in advance when work is planned to take place.

construction issues

- 33** The removal of excavated spoil is commonly achieved by the use of an enclosed conveyor belt, which draws excavated materials from the site, over the footway, and deposits it in a skip placed on the carriageway. The conveyor belt must be sited at least 2.3m above the footway. Contractors must ensure that this equipment meets all safety requirements. In most locations, the use of a grab lorry to empty a skip on-site is likely to cause obstruction to the highway. Skips should, therefore, be removed from the site to be emptied.

who to contact

Planning Advice and Information

If you wish to discuss your proposals before submitting a planning application, or for advice on whether planning permission is required and whether your proposals are in line with UDP policies, contact:

Putney area – 020 8871 6632 or 8411

Battersea area – 020 8871 6639 or 8412

Balham & Tooting area – 020 8871 8413 or 8416

Information on current planning applications and on the planning history of premises is available on the Council's website –

<http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/planning/default.htm>

Copies of planning application forms can be downloaded, and the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) which contains the relevant policies, can also be viewed and downloaded.

Planning application forms can also be obtained from the Technical Services Reception on the 5th floor of the New Town Hall, between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday, and between 9.30am and 12.30pm on Saturday, or by telephoning 020 8871 6637.

For a copy of the Council's Access Guidelines or Guidelines for Advertisement Control, contact the Borough Planner's Service at the Town Hall or telephone 020 8871 6650.

Building Control

For advice and information on building regulation matters, including retaining walls and means of escape in case of fire, contact Building Control on 020 8871 7620.

Environmental Health

Information on daylight requirements and fitness standards can be obtained from Environmental Services on 020 8871 6129.

who to contact

Highways

For information on traffic and highways issues, telephone 020 8871 6611

Skip licences can be obtained by telephoning 020 8871 8871.

Environment Agency

Information on flood risk arising from groundwater flooding can be obtained from the Water Resources in the Environment Agency,

Telephone 01276 454535.

General information can be obtained from:

Development Planning

Environment Agency

10 Albert Embankment

London SE1 7SP

Telephone 0208 305 4003

Thames Water

General information, including flood risk and anti-flood devices can be obtained from:

Waste Water Customer Services Team,

Thames Water Customer Services

PO Box 436

Swindon SN38 1TU

Telephone 08457 200 897

Information and applications for new sewerage connections can be obtained from:

Development Services Department

Thames Water Utilities Ltd

Waste Water Connections

PO Box 81

BRENTFORD

Middlesex TW8 0EE

Telephone 08457 200 897

If you have any queries or require further assistance about the Council's planning policies, phone 020 8871 6649 or write to:

Borough Planner's Service

Technical Services Department

Town Hall

Wandsworth High Street

London SW18 2PU.

e-mail: boroughplanner@wandsworth.gov.uk

appendix 1: relevant UDP policies

Chapter		Policy
Housing	Alterations and Extensions to Residential Properties	H4 and paragraph 153
Regeneration and Development Principles	Flooding	RDP10(a)

appendix 2: Planning Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 14 Feb 2002 Executive 25 Feb 2002

**Report of the Borough Planner on the results of
consultation on draft planning guidance on
residential basement extensions
Paper no. 02-259**

summary

This report describes the results of consultations on this draft guidance and recommends its approval as supplementary planning guidance to the Unitary Development Plan.

Recommendation

- 1** The Planning Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to support the recommendation in paragraph 3.
- 2** If the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approve views, comments or recommendations on this report, these will be reported to the Executive for their consideration.
- 3** The Executive are recommended to agree the guidance on basement extensions as supplementary planning guidance to the Unitary Development Plan.

Background

- 4** On 15th November 2001, the Planning Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on draft planning guidance on residential basement extensions (Paper No. 01-1016). The draft guidance was approved by the Executive on 26th November 2001, subject to consultations.
- 5** The guidance is a response to the increasing number of proposals being made for such extensions. It is aimed at householders, developers and builders, and provides advice on the quality and amenity of the underground accommodation being created. It aims to control the impact on the street scene, especially in conservation areas, arising from the excavation of lightwells in streets where these features are not currently found and from substantial changes to front elevations of the houses concerned. The guidance also covers advice on building regulations, environmental health and highway considerations.

appendix 2

Consultation

- 6 Copies of the draft guidance were sent to the Putney, Balham, Battersea and Wandsworth Societies, the Environment Agency and Thames Water Utilities, as well as to three companies specialising in basement conversions, and a sample of applicants who had recently submitted planning applications for basement conversions. The Wandsworth (Conservation Area) Advisory Committee (WCAAC) considered the guidance at their meeting on 8th January 2002. The document was also placed on the Planning News pages on the Council's website, where comments were also invited, and a press release was issued.

Responses to consultation

- 7 **WCAAC.** The guidelines were welcomed and commended for their clarity. It was suggested that the statements concerning listed buildings and conservation areas should appear in bold type.
- 8 The Wandsworth Society. The guidelines are clearly-written and helpful. Guidance is needed to avoid possible inconsistencies in decision-making and it is hoped that it will be fully adhered to when considering planning applications. Whilst the Society agree the contents, they suggest that there should be a stronger emphasis on the character of the property rather than a hard and fast rule relating to the retention of half the garden (UDP policy H5(h)). There should also be reference to minimising noise and nuisance to neighbours through good design of the completed basement (i.e. its eventual use and layout rather than building works). In addition, there should be specific reference to limitation of dust and noise during building works.
- 9 Environment Agency. A consolidated response was received from the Development Planning and Water Resources divisions. The Agency stresses the distinction between groundwater and surface water flooding. They comment that it is necessary to encourage people to check whether their property is vulnerable to groundwater flooding at the planning application stage. The Agency can advise on whether the local area has a record of a high water table or of groundwater flooding. Measures to deal with groundwater flooding are also indicated in their response.
- 10 **Thames Water Utilities.** If new or enlarged basements require new connections to found and surface water sewers, then permission from the Developer Services Department would be required. It is preferable that waste water is pumped to the surface and then allowed to flow by gravity to the public sewer. Where the basement is a separate dwelling the new property would have to be registered with Thames Water for the payment of water and sewerage charges. Under no circumstances should the basement increase the risk of flooding to either the basement itself or to any dwelling. It may be necessary to install "on site" flood protection in order to achieve this aim.

appendix 2

- 11 The London Basement Company Ltd.** The design of lightwells does need to be controlled. The Council's approach, which judges each basement conversion on its merits, is welcomed, unlike the approach of other boroughs which are introducing inflexible design models. The protection of a lightwell can be achieved by a horizontal grille, by lightwell railings, or by securing an area of the garden containing the lightwell with railings and a lockable gate. It is important that these options exist, as the solution will depend on the size of the garden, and style of the property. Problems have arisen where the garden is very short. In such cases, the preferred solution would be to maintain a sufficiently large lightwell but cover it with a walkable grille. Such a flush-fitting grille would retain the amenity space of a front garden and would not necessarily detract from the appearance, nor the light entering the property, and would allow for bin storage. Concern is raised over the limited size of skip allowed during construction works. Allowing larger skips retained on site during construction and emptying these with a grab lorry reduces the time taken to carry out the excavations and limits movements to one per day, rather than four or more skip movements per day.
- 12 Cellar Conversions Ltd.** There should be a specific policy on the type of railings that would be acceptable. Lightwells are a contentious issue. In areas where front gardens are small, the guidelines should include examples of good design which would show how means of escape and minimum light levels could be achieved. The use of large glazed areas, including glazed bays or glassed-over areas could help achieve this. There also needs to be a definite policy on the size of skips allowed. Some companies are using larger skips/grabs lorries than they have been permitted to use in the past.
- 13 Other Comments.** A local architect generally welcomed the guidance, but felt that the large skips and heavy lorries involved can result in cumulative damage to road surfaces. A Schedule of Condition should be taken before building activities commence. Any damage can therefore be defined and charged for accordingly. A cash deposit could also be enforced, subject to satisfactory clearance of the site.

Comments

- 14** The consultations confirm the need for particular care over the design of lightwells. Most of the consultees support the flexible approach in the guidelines, allowing for a variety of solutions depending on the nature of the property and the character of the area, and setting out the factors to be taken into account. Lightwells must be large enough to provide sufficient light and, often, a means of escape, without dominating the front garden. If these objectives cannot be met, a lightwell may not be achievable. Similarly the most suitable type of railings will also depend on the character of the street and the area, particularly in conservation areas. The guidance should not be prescriptive on these matters, but will be illustrated to amplify technical points and show examples of good practice.

appendix 2

- 16** One of the main areas of concern about these projects is the impact of excavation and construction work. The guidelines include general advice about minimising nuisance to neighbours. This would include noise and dust.
- 17** A number of consultees raised the question of the size of skip that can be used to deal with excavated spoil. Highway licences normally limit the size of skip used to 6 cubic metres (8 yards), although 16 yard skips have been allowed in some cases. Building companies seek to use larger skips, which do not need to be emptied so often. However, the larger skips have to be emptied in situ by grab lorries rather than being removed when full. While these arrangements may be feasible in some situations, particularly off the highway, the guidance indicates that in most locations, the use of a grab lorry to empty a skip is likely to cause obstruction to the highway, and that skips should therefore be removed to be emptied.
- 18** Other matters referred to by consultees are already addressed by the guidelines, including groundwater flooding and basement tanking, pumping of waste water to the sewers, and flood protection measures. The Council has no powers to control the layout and uses of rooms within basement conversions.
- 19** Bold type was used specifically to highlight UDP policies, in order to assist the cross-referencing of the guidance with these policies.
- 20** Appropriate contacts for further advice, including Council services and outside agencies, will be added to the guidelines.

Conclusion

- 17** The draft guidelines have generally been welcomed and supported in the responses to consultation. It is not considered that any changes to the guidance are necessary. Subject to the inclusion of a detailed Contacts section and explanatory illustrations, the guidance can now be confirmed as supplementary planning guidance to the Council's Unitary Development Plan.

I Thompson
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7 February 2002

appendix 2

Background Papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:-

- 1** Report to the Planning Overview and Scrutiny Committee 15th November 2001 (Paper No. 01-1016)
- 2** Representations received on the draft guidelines.

If you wish to inspect any of these documents, please initially contact the Committee Secretary on 020 8871 6006.

English

If you have problems understanding this in English please contact

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Bengali

এই লিফলেটটি বুঝতে অসুবিধা হলে
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Hindi

यदि आपको इसे अंग्रेज़ी में समझने में
कठिनाई होती है, तो कृपया सम्पर्क करें:

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Punjabi

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Gujarati

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સાધો:

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Urdu

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