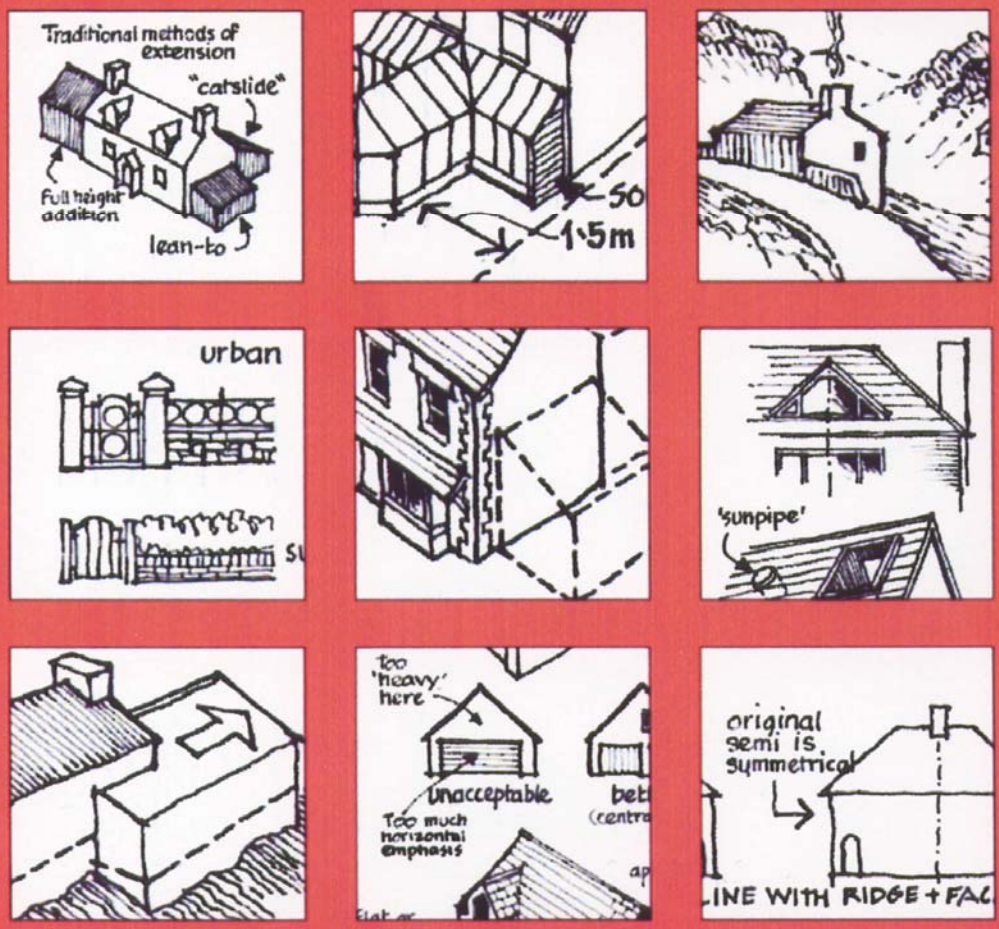
Forest of Dean
Residential Design Guide

Alterations & Extensions



a guide for householders

Forest of Dean District Council

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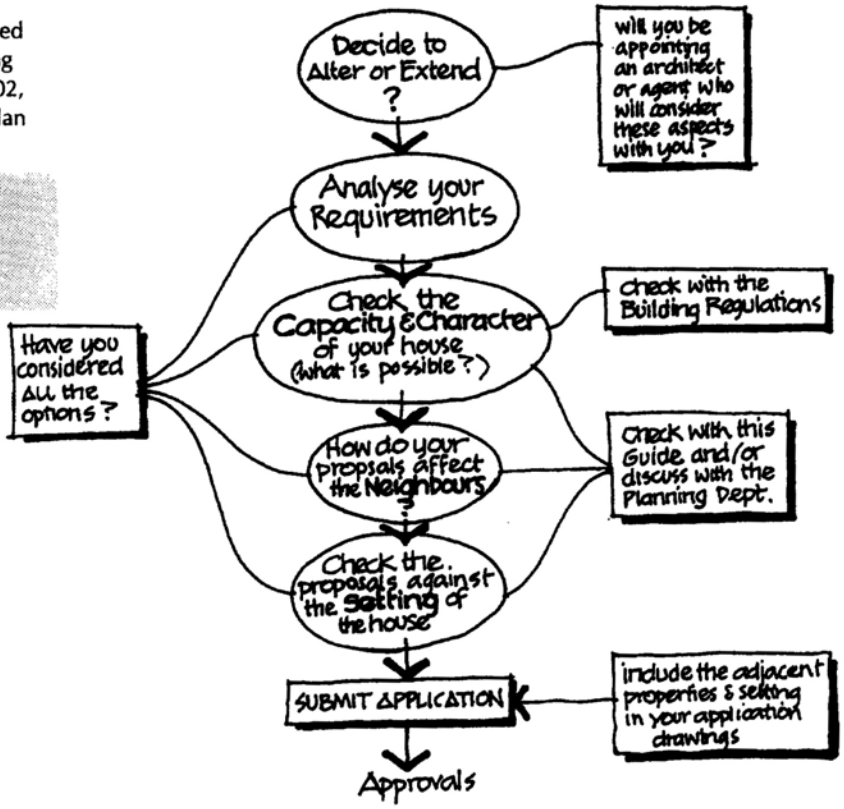
This document was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in February 2002, under the District Local Plan Review Policy (R) FBE.1

THE DESIGN PROCESS....



Introduction

Most estate agents agree that sympathetic alterations or extensions to a house enhance its resale value, and that the reverse is true: - poorly designed and executed work which detracts from the character of the house will depress its value.

For instance, if the proposals are:

- too bulky and dominant
- positioned inappropriately in relation to the original house
- inappropriate in design
- built up to the boundary
- constructed of materials which do not complement the building
- intrusive to the character of the street scene

- then they are likely to be unattractive and poor neighbours.

The purpose of this guide.

This guide is compiled to advise householders on approaches to the design of extensions and alterations which are likely to be appropriate to the building and its setting and which are therefore more likely to be granted planning permission. It is advisable to appoint an architect experienced in sensitive conversion work; however this guide is offered to assist where this is not possible. All the alterations and extensions identified in this guide will require Building Regulation approval and virtually all the work shown will require Planning Permission before work commences. Some buildings have additional protection and require Listed Building Consent or Conservation Area Consent. Listed Building Consent will be required for any internal or external changes. It is advisable to check with the Local Authority at an early stage when considering your requirements.

The approach to design taken by this guide.

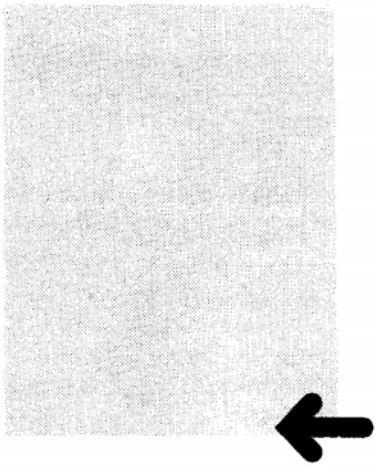
New development should be sympathetic to the buildings and setting of the District. It is therefore important to start the design process by analysing three main aspects:

- Your Requirements
- The Character of your house
- The Setting of your house

In adopting this approach it is not intended to suggest that every extension or alteration has to copy the original building, but that the proposals do not dominate the original building in terms of bulk, plan shape and materials.

It is possible therefore, for an extension to be sympathetic and not dominant yet be of a 'modern' design, **IF** it follows the same principles as a more 'traditional' design, based on local buildings.

The Residential Design Guide identifies a range of 'character areas' and 'townscape areas' to be found in the District. You may find it useful to consult this guide to help identify the character of the area in which you propose to undertake your work.



- **Forest of Dean Residential Design Guide**
  Forest of Dean District Council
  See pages 9-24

Understanding your Requirements

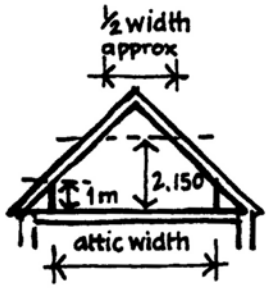
What do you want to achieve?

In most cases the basic requirement is to provide more space, such as an extra room or a garage, or to alter the existing space to make it more convenient, eg to create a bathroom or bedroom on the first floor, or to improve a cramped staircase.

Before the design is finalised, have all options been considered?

There is usually more than one way to achieve your requirements. The best and most cost effective solution is usually to 'go with the grain' of the original house ie:

- minimise the removal of structural walls and chimneys
- extend in the general direction of the building
- look around and see how similar, often older conversions/alterations have been achieved.
- Repair rather than replace items such as windows, doors etc.



Defining limits

The potential for alteration and extension of your house is not infinite.

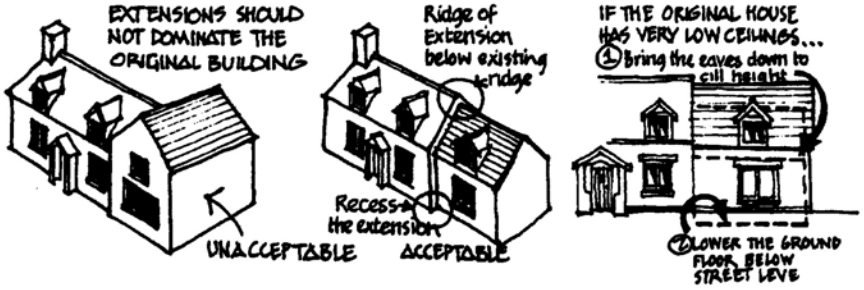
- The amount of additional floor space may be considered as excessive when neighbouring properties might be overlooked or overshadowed.
- The amount of take-up of open space on your property may be excessive, resulting in significant loss of your garden.
- As a general guide, headroom in the roofspace should not be less than 2.150 metres (7'0") across half the width of the roofspace above 1metre (3'3").

Understanding the Character of your House

There are three basic types of house in the District. Each type will require different approaches to alterations and extensions as they are of different size, shape and materials.

(a) The Cottage.

These are the oldest buildings, often dating back to the 16th century or earlier. Cottages take the form of a rectangle with the ridge of the roof lying parallel to the longer dimension. The depth of the building is usually no more than 5 metres (16 feet). Floor to ceiling heights are generally lower than those expected today and the upper storey is often composed of rooms in the roof with substantial areas having sloping ceilings, making headroom even lower. Staircases are often cramped and winding. Eaves and gable end details are very simple with virtually no projecting bargeboards or other features. Traditionally extensions are often single storey "lean-to" with a lower pitched roof, or a two storey addition to one side.

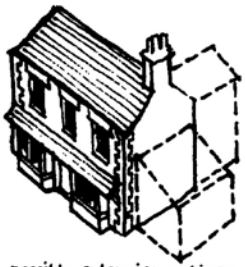


Cottage Extensions

(b) Victorian/Edwardian House

This is a mid 19th century to early 20th century house, not unique to the area in basic form, but it is typical in its use of facing materials, usually of Forest sandstone with brick quoins. These houses are usually found in short terraces of three to six dwellings or as detached houses. The terraced form normally has a quite narrow frontage – about 5 metres (16 feet) but is relatively deep – about 8 metres (26 feet). Room heights are at least those of modern houses and the roof pitch is about 30 degrees. Some examples have bay windows. Detached forms are wider, with a central front door and bay windows.

Opportunities for extension are limited on narrow fronted or terrace types, with possibilities for single storey additions to the rear. Types with space to one side have more possibilities. Attic space may be possible but headroom is often limited.



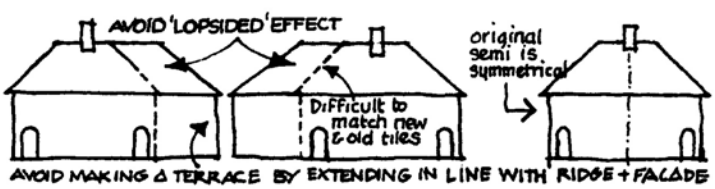
possible extension options

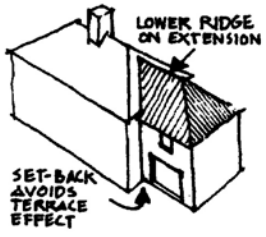
(c) Recent House Types

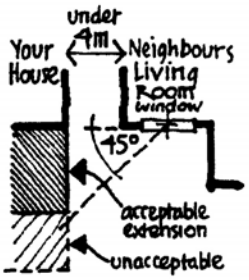
These are mostly built to developers standard plans from the 1930's to the present day, ranging from short terraces to semi detached and detached houses. With such a variety it is difficult to generalise, but most houses have few features which are characteristic of the area. They are generally suburban in type, having deep front gardens and garages to one side.

Materials. Usually brick, mainly red, sometimes earlier types are rendered. More recent types are clad in reconstructed stone. Houses of the 1960's and 70's may have panels of tile hanging or weatherboarding. **Details.** White painted softwood window frames. Often large areas of glass in 1960's – 70's types, also glazed doors. Later types often have upvc window frames and doors.

Interwar house types have the greatest potential for loft conversion due to their steeper roof pitch. Houses of the 1980's onwards also tend to have steeper roof pitches but their lightweight trussed rafter construction may require considerable adaptation to achieve clear roofspace and increased floor loading.

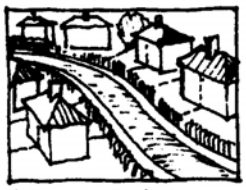






Forest/rural setting. Note how farm buildings are grouped. Long views

Scattered village. Groups of buildings directly fronting roads & tracks



Suburban roads. Evenly spaced semis. Avoid terracing effect of extensions

Regular terraced Town Layout. Mixed uses. Limited extension space

Understanding the Setting of your House

Before finalising your proposals, stand back and look at the house in its setting.

- **What impact will your proposals have on your immediate neighbours?**

- Are the proposals likely to deprive the neighbours of daylight? (eg effect on light reaching their main living rooms and sitting out area).

- Would the proposals affect the privacy of your neighbours? (eg will you be overlooking your neighbours or subjecting them to unreasonable noise?)

- **How will your proposals look within the street scene?**

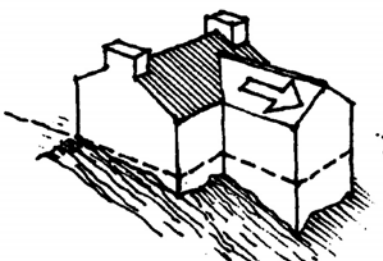
- Will your proposals look out of place related to the spacing, height and design of the other buildings in the street? This does not mean that the proposals have to match the neighbours, but they should not dominate.

- **Will your proposals be visible from a longer distance? (especially from a highway or other public viewpoint).**

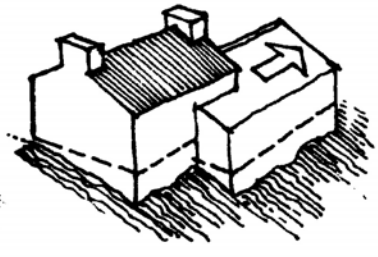
- if so will they be of such an eye catching shape or colour as to spoil a pleasant scene ? (in the landscape or the townscape).

- remember that even a rear extension may be visible from a distance in some situations.

- Hillside settings will mean that extensions could look very bulky and obtrusive. Extending along the slope or stepping down the slope is likely to have less impact and be less expensive to build than an extension which projects from the slope.



Extending from the slope



Extending along the slope

Garages and Annexes

As a general rule the garage should be SET BACK from the line of the front elevation of the house.

This is because;
- A garage projecting into the garden provides privacy.
- Space is thereby provided for a hardstanding in front of the garage, about 6m (20ft) from the front boundary.
- The front door is given more prominence than the car.

If a double garage is required, each car space should be given separate doors, divided by a central pier. It is advisable that the roof ridge should be parallel with the doors.

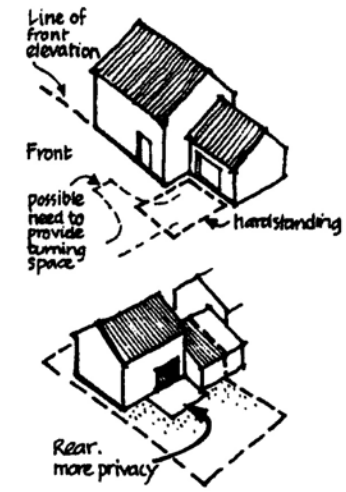
This is because;
- The garage doors should not dominate the house.
- A gable end over the doors can look too heavy and the garage cannot link satisfactorily to the house in this way.

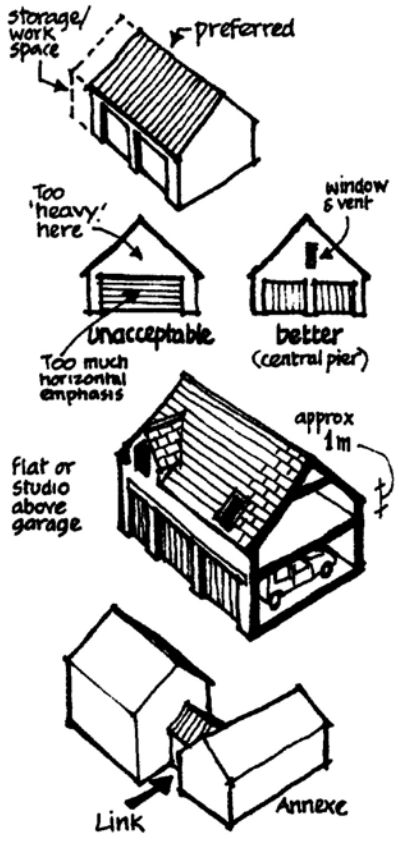
Garages are often too useful for mere car storage. Adding about 1.5m (5 ft) to the width allows for garden storage, workbenches, bicycles and possible access to the roofspace. (Adding to depth is also useful but this may result in a ridge being too high or a pitch being too low).

Accommodation above the garage space may be considered, unless this will dominate the original building. Normally unless the original house has eaves of 5 m (16 ft) or above, accommodation should be within the roofspace, where the cill height equals the eaves height, being about 1 m (3 ft 3 ins) above floor height. (See page 2: Defining limits).

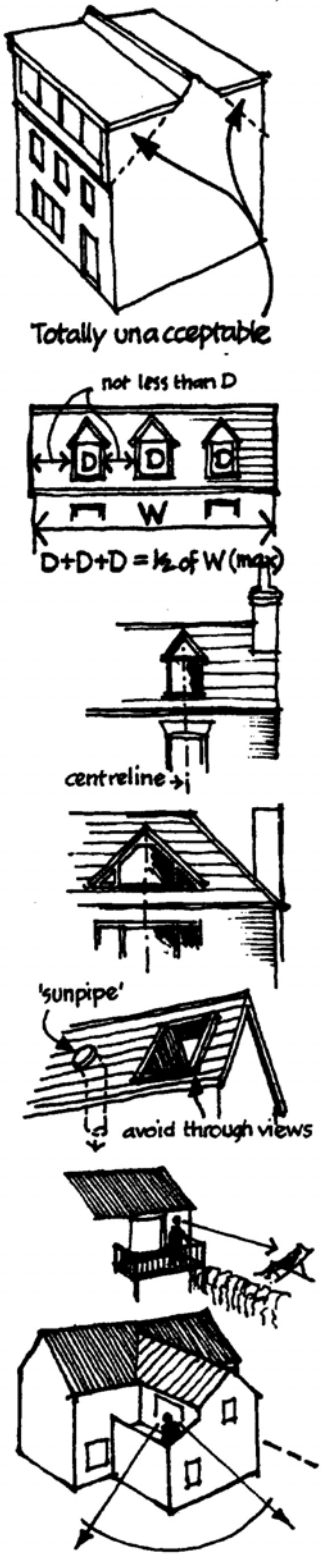
Where accommodation above a garage or an annex is planned, ensure that the annex is designed so that it can be linked or accessed from the original building.

Remember that when planning extra accommodation you may need to consider that it might be used by someone who is or could become disabled. This will affect the width of doors, threshold design and the layout of bathrooms. It is worth noting that these measures will make the accommodation easier for everyone to use and could have resale benefits.





Extending into the Roofspace



Dormers

The guiding principle when extending into the roofspace of the house is to retain the character of the original building, ie make the building still appear to be two storey (or three storey) but with rooms in the roof, NOT to give the impression that a two storey building has been turned into a three storey building.

This is because

- The original character and design of the house could be destroyed.
- The proposals could result in excessive overlooking of adjacent properties.
- The character of the street would be altered if all properties increased their height by a storey.

Dormer design should reflect the character of the original building. Note how dormers have been designed in nearby older buildings.

Keep the width of roof covered by dormers to about half the total width of the roof to avoid a single continuous dormer.

The space between dormers should be not less than a dormer width to avoid a cramped appearance.

Centre a proposed dormer on the centreline of the window below. Avoid random spacing along the roof.

Rooflights

These can sometimes be a less obtrusive alternative in a roof where dormers would be inappropriate. They may also look acceptable in more modern buildings or where incorporated with solar panels. It is easy to forget that the roof receives more direct sunlight than the rest of the house and therefore smaller sized units will normally be sufficient.

Rooflights should not be located opposite each other on either side of a pitched roof, as this can give a weakening effect and privacy may be lost.

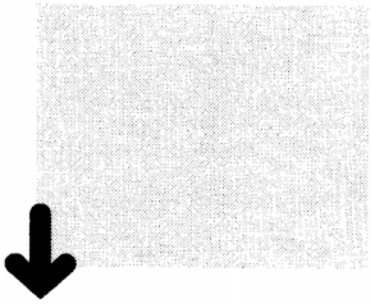
Consider "sunpipes" as an alternative to rooflights and dormers. These are unobtrusive and can direct natural light into dark rooms on the first or ground floor.

Balconies

These features are not typical of the area and can be intrusive, especially when viewed from a long distance. They can also affect the privacy of adjacent properties. It is preferable to integrate the balcony with the building and thus mask sensitive views.

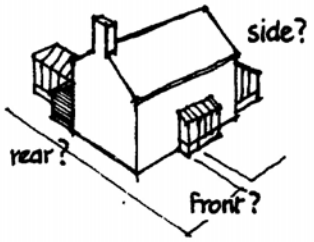
Conservatories

Conservatories are a popular method of extending the living space of a house and enjoying the garden at cooler times of the year. They can also help to keep the house warm if they are placed on the sunny south facing façade.



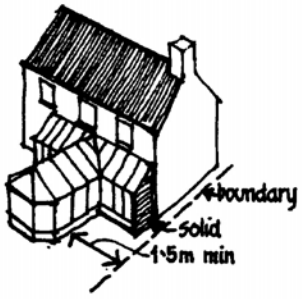
However there can be drawbacks if certain aspects of design are not considered.

- The conservatory could be a source of nuisance if it is situated on or near a boundary adjacent to a neighbouring house. (ie noise, overlooking, source of light at night, fire).
- The style of the conservatory (usually a version of Victorian in upvc) may not be appropriate to the character of the building or its setting.



Normally conservatories should:

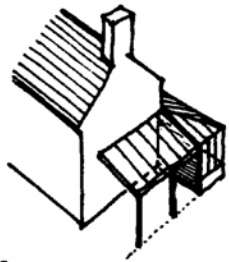
- be located on the rear (private) side of the house, or possibly on one side (subject to the points below).
- have the long axis parallel with the house; but if it is at right angles, and fully glazed, it should be located at least 1.5 m (5 ft) from a boundary. It can be set closer if the wall facing the boundary is brick or similar and the eaves no higher than 2.1 m (6 ft 10 ins).



Conservatories can be of an elegant modern design as an alternative to 'Victorian' upvc, and can incorporate external shades and ventilation devices.

Normally conservatories should be no higher than the underside of first floor cills, unless located in situations where they will not be seen from a distance of approx 25 m (80 ft).

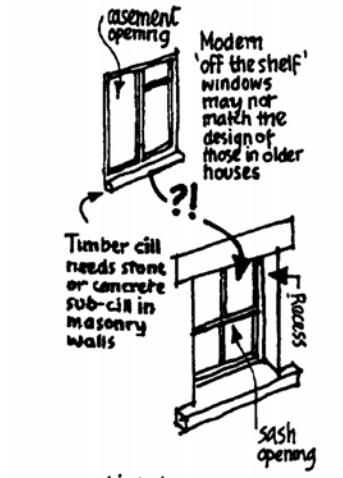
Unless a house is situated well behind its front boundary ie over 20 m (64 ft), large conservatories should not be located on the front elevation. However conservatories of no more than 1.2 m (4 ft) deep, normally extending no more than half the width of the house, could be situated on the front of the house where a "verandah" type entrance is typical, or where this will not dominate the front elevation as a whole.

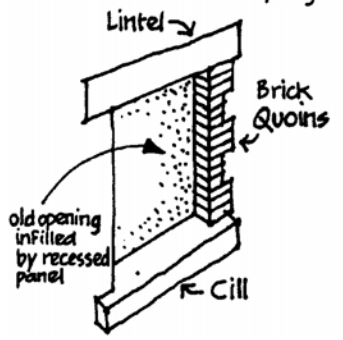


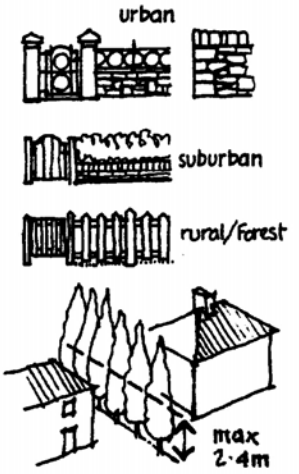
Integrated Car Port and Conservatory gives a more 'organised' appearance and allows for future adaption to a conservatory

All carport roofs should be pitched to ensure adequate drainage

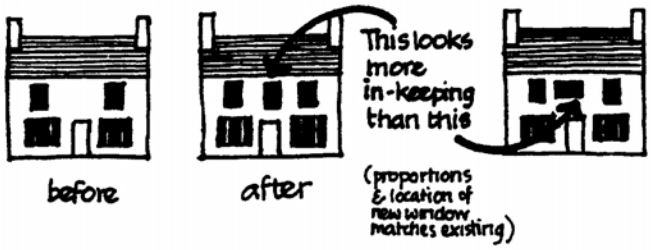
Making Openings in Walls







Keep the proposed openings (doors and windows) in the same proportion as the existing openings in the building. This helps to maintain the building's character.



Filling-in Openings in Walls

If the wall is constructed of brick and/or stone, it is advisable to accept the fact that the 'bricked up' opening is unlikely to be invisible. The original brick or stone will be weathered and it is difficult to get an exact match of materials and mortar jointing. Removal of the cill and lintel would be expensive. Instead the lintel, cill and quoins could be retained and the infilling of the opening recessed by about 50 -100 mm (2-4 ins). Infilling could be of brick, render or boarding depending on the material of the wall and the character of the house.

Boundaries

A variety of boundaries are to be found in the District; urban, suburban and forest/rural. The style and materials of each are as much part of the character of the house and its setting as the building itself. In repair or reinstatement work it is advisable to note the boundaries of the oldest or least altered properties nearby, to give an idea of the most appropriate boundary.

Boundaries of tall closely spaced evergreen trees can be as obtrusive as high walls, even in a forest setting. In exceptional circumstances, if this form of screening is considered necessary, evergreens of at least two species should be planted and trimmed to grow no higher than 2.4 m (8 ft 2 ins), in order to reduce overshadowing and also intrusiveness in long distance views.

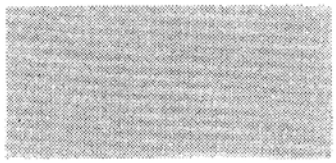
In the central part of the District, due to the ancient Forest privileges concerning the free grazing of sheep, it is important that properties have continuous and secure boundaries to prevent damage to gardens.

Materials

As a general rule use 'natural' and local building materials wherever possible, especially if the building is listed or in a conservation area. It is fortunate that building stone is still quarried within the Forest of Dean and that bricks are also manufactured locally. If stone is too expensive, use it sparingly, eg for cills and lintels. It is not advisable, to use reconstructed stone blocks to extend a stone building as they never match in colour, texture and unit size. Use render or an appropriate brick instead.

Timber replacement/repaired doors or windows can be manufactured on a customised basis to match an original design. They can be an economic alternative to some mass produced components.

Upvc. This plastic type material is widely used for replacement windows and doors. It is rarely possible to achieve an exact replica of the original window design and is difficult to repair. Upvc contains toxins which are released in house fires and are banned in many areas of the EU. Upvc is unlikely to be approved for use in Listed Buildings or in Conservation Areas.



A list of suppliers of traditional building materials produced in the local area is available from the Department of Planning and Leisure Services.

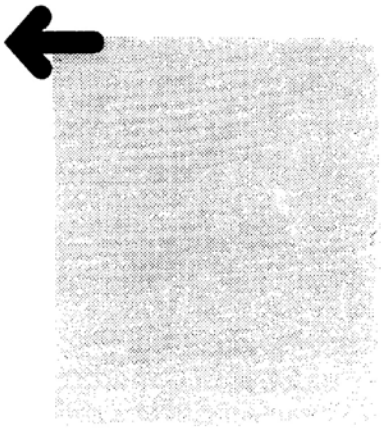
Submitting an Application

The drawings should clearly differentiate between **existing** and **proposed** work and should include adjacent buildings on plans and elevations.

Contact

If you wish to discuss your proposals, please contact the reception staff in the **Department of Planning and Leisure Services**, who will put you in touch with the appropriate officer.

tel : 01594 812 312



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