

# COVENTRY

**Extending your home  
- a design guide**



Coventry City Council

**Adopted - April 2003**

## 1. Introduction

These notes are intended as an explanatory guide to provide advice to householders and their agents as to best practice in terms of planning and designing extensions to residential dwellings. They constitute Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to the Coventry Development Plan, which was adopted in December 2001.

This Supplementary Planning Guidance was adopted on 10 April 2003 and follows an 8 week public consultation period between December 2002 and February 2003.

### Getting Started

A poorly designed extension can reduce the value of a house if it spoils its character or takes up too much of the existing garden. Careful consideration must therefore be given to its external appearance and the impact on your own and neighbouring properties.

Extending your home may require Planning Permission and/or Building Regulation Approval. Planning and Building Regulations are two separate matters. If Planning Permission is obtained, this does not mean that Building Regulations are automatically given and vice versa. It is advisable to obtain Planning Permission (if required) before Building Regulation Approval.

Some forms of development can be carried out as 'Permitted Development' i.e. without the need for a planning application. Leaflets are available from the *Planning Advisory Desk* explaining your permitted development rights. Please note that approval under the Building Regulations may still be required.

If planning permission is required an application to the City Council must be made. Application forms and a set of scaled drawings must be submitted together with

the appropriate fee, which is set nationally by the Government. Forms and a schedule of the fees are available from the *Planning Advisory Desk*. Guidance notes on completing the applications forms and the information/ drawings required are also included with the forms.

The City Council recommends that you use a competent agent, such as an architect or surveyor who understands the various regulations

### Assessing your Application

A Planning Officer will consider your planning application and in most instances a decision will be made by Officers under Delegated Powers. .

We will try to reach a decision on your application within 8 weeks. Submitting a valid application with all the necessary information and right first time will help us to consider your proposals quicker.



Good Design

First and foremost it is important to ensure that extensions are in keeping with the design and character of the existing house and of the surrounding area. Materials, colours, textures and local distinctiveness should all be considered within the context of the local area in order to ensure a high quality urban environment.

Every site is unique and therefore all applications will be considered on their own respective merits having regard to the particular characteristics of each site.

A planning application is a public document. We may notify immediate neighbours of the proposal or put up a site notice so that people have the chance to comment on the application. The Council will consider written objections and comments that are relevant to the application, and which are received before a decision is made.

It is a sensible idea to discuss your proposals with immediate neighbours before submitting them.

The Planning Officer will also be looking at how your proposal affects other people – your neighbours, other people in the street, and the general public who pass by.

Relevant planning considerations include whether or not a proposal will cause::

- Loss of light;
- Overlooking and loss of privacy;
- Over-development of a site;
- Visual intrusion; and
- Impact on the streetscene and character of the area

Devaluation of a property is not a factor which can be taken into account.

#### Seeking Advice

General information about the need for planning permission is available by telephone or in person from the *Planning Advisory Desk*.

Site-specific advice can be given if you submit a written outline of the intended proposal including sketches and drawings wherever possible.

However, priority is given to planning applications and, therefore, informal enquiries may take some time. It usually takes around 4 weeks for a response to informal planning enquiries.

Applicants are advised to seek specific advice if their proposal affects any of the following:

- A Listed Building;
- A Conservation Area; and/or
- A Green Belt.

#### Party Walls Etc. Act 1996

You are advised to check if your proposal involves works covered by the *Party Walls Etc. Act 1996*, and if so you are recommended to seek independent advice. Advice Booklets are available from the *Planning Advisory Desk* and *The Stationary Office*.

#### Guidance Notes

Guidance notes dealing with various forms of home extensions are available. Please ask for the note, which deals with the particular proposal you have in mind. Notes available in the series "*Extending your Home – A Design Guide*" are: -

- Extensions at the Side;
- Corner Plots;

- Extensions at the Front;
- Extensions at the Rear; and
- Roof Extensions and Alterations.

No general guidance of this type can cover every situation, however they are intended to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable examples of common types of development. They should in no way inhibit imaginative and quality design solutions.

However the notes constitute Supplementary Planning Guidance and schemes designed in accordance with the advice and principles involved obviously stand a much better chance of being approved than those that do not.

#### Contact Details

##### Planning enquiries to:

Planning Control Floor 2 Civic Centre 4, Much Park Street, Coventry CV1 2PY.

Tel: (024) 7683 1212

Fax: (024) 7683 1296

Email: [planning.control@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:planning.control@coventry.gov.uk)

##### Building Regulation enquiries to:

Unit 3

Westwood House

Westwood Business Park

Coventry

CV4 8JB

Help line number (024) 7678 5137



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## 2. Extensions at the Side

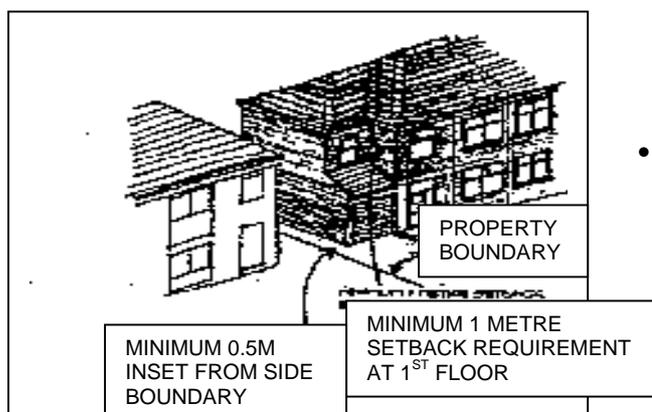
Side extensions, where possible, are a popular form of extension.

Unless your property is on a corner plot (for which there are separate Guidelines) the space available at the side of a property can, in many cases, provide the only means of access to the rear garden and a route for garden and kitchen waste (e.g. wheeled bins) without passing through the house.

You may consider it necessary to maintain an access route from the front of the property to the rear without passing through a habitable room, such as a kitchen, lounge or dining room, to avoid having to carry garden rubbish through the house.



On some properties there is insufficient width to leave a gap and extending at the side involves building up to the side boundary. When both neighbours do this a terrace of houses can develop. Consider seriously if you wish to end up as part of a terrace when you extend. Unless the design of two adjoining properties is carefully coordinated the resulting effect can be ugly and is likely to be refused.



## General Principles

Each site is unique and proposals will be determined on their own individual merits having regard to the local distinctive character of the area and the principles below.

In addition to this, when assessing the impact of a proposal on neighbouring properties, some of the factors that consideration will be given to will include:

- Orientation;
- Changes in ground level; and
- Staggers in building lines.

For example, particular care should be taken with a proposal that would obstruct the southerly aspects of an adjoining property or where the application sites ground level is higher than adjoining properties.

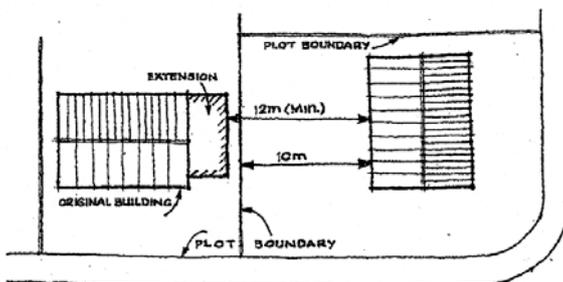
Proposals must be sympathetic and complimentary to their surroundings.

In order to protect the character of a given residential area and prevent the linking of non-terraced houses, first floor side extensions should:

- incorporate a set back from the main front wall of the original house of at least 1m, and;
- be set at least 0.5m from the side boundary.
- The ridge of the roof should be lowered in conjunction with the setback.
- All side extensions should have a pitched roof with materials and slope matching the existing house. Where the character of an area consists of predominantly hipped roof designs, the use of a gable end on the extension will not be permitted.
- Extensions at the side should not extend beyond the established front building lines of the house, unless part of the established character of the area.

Single storey side extensions to houses should normally be set back at least one brick (225mm) from the main house front to avoid bonding and brick matching problems. No setback will be required if a matching brick can be found or the property is rendered, and a pitched roof to match the existing is shown,

- In some instances a neighbouring property may have a window in the side elevation, which provides the only source of light to a habitable room such as a living room, kitchen or a bedroom. Side extensions that adversely affect the only source of light to a habitable room will not be acceptable.
- Windows will not be permitted in the side elevations of extensions where overlooking into a neighbouring property could result. Obscure glazing or an appropriate boundary treatment will usually be required for proposed conservatories, which have predominantly glazed elevations.



Where the side of your house is situated near to the rear or side garden of neighbouring properties, a minimum distance of 12m should normally be maintained between the side elevation of the extended property and the rear elevation of the neighbour's properties. This is in order to reduce the visual impact of extensions on the amenities of neighbouring properties. This separation distance may need to be increased if the ground level of your site is elevated above the neighbour's property.

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### 3. Corner Plots

Each site is unique and proposals will be determined on their own individual merits having regard to the local distinctive character of the area and the principles below.

In addition to this, when assessing the impact of a proposal some of the factors that consideration will be given to will include:

- Changes in ground level; and
- The location of the extension in respect of established relevant building lines in the vicinity.

Proposals must be sympathetic and complimentary to their surroundings.

Special considerations apply if you have a corner plot. Many people purchase houses on corner plots because they appear to have space to extend. However it is often these spacious corner plots that provide suburban areas with their green and open characteristics.



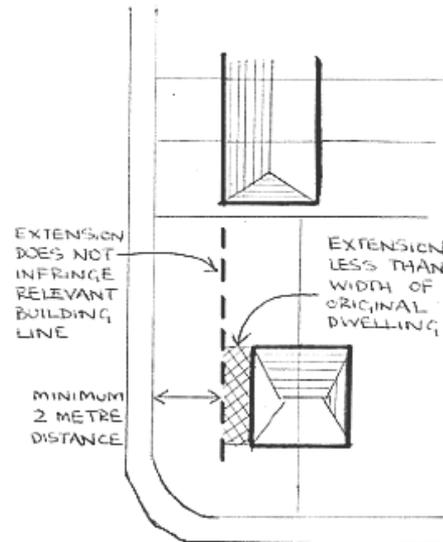
### General Principles

In addition to the factors mentioned above, proposed extensions into these distinctive areas will be considered in the context of the following;

- Openness & Character of the plot in relation to the surrounding area; and
- The scale of the extensions relative to the existing dwelling

In order to achieve this, proposed extensions should at least:

- Be less than the width of the original dwellinghouse; **and**
- Not infringe any established relevant building lines in the immediate vicinity; **and**
- Maintain a minimum distance of 2m between the edge of the side extension and the boundary (measured at the narrowest point).



In order to retain a good design, bonding and subservience of an extension, setbacks at ground and first floor level may be desirable for side extensions to corner plots.

Extensions to corner properties that "wrap around" two elevations of a property i.e. the side and the front, or the side and the back, can result in an incongruous design that affects the openness of a plot. Single storey extensions of this nature will need very careful consideration, but two storey "wrap around" extensions will not normally be permitted and will normally need to be separated into distinct side and rear extensions.

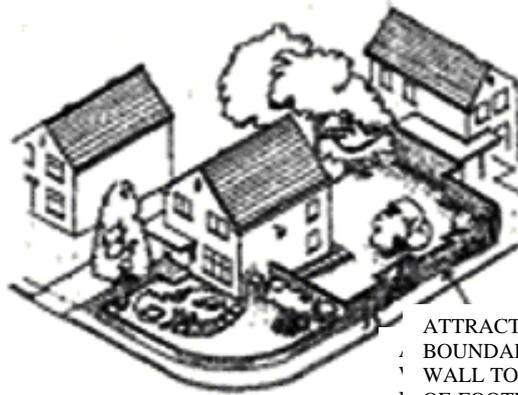
Visibility sightlines at road junctions and corners must not be obscured by any proposals.

### Boundary Treatments

Owners of corner plots often wish to enclose as much of their side garden as possible. Subject to

- highway visibility sightline requirements being maintained and
- the proposal not adversely affecting the character of an area.

this will normally be acceptable. However, a suitable standard of boundary treatment will be required. This becomes more important the more prominent and nearer it is to the back of the pavement.



When considering proposals for boundary treatments, regard will be had to the character and type of the treatments in the surrounding area. A high quality attractive screen wall with appropriate detailing such as a soldier course or tile crease, or a wall/fence combination will be required depending upon compatibility with the character of the area. Boundary treatments should not exceed 2m in height. However, this may vary if there is a change in levels. In these instances proposals will be considered on their own merits.

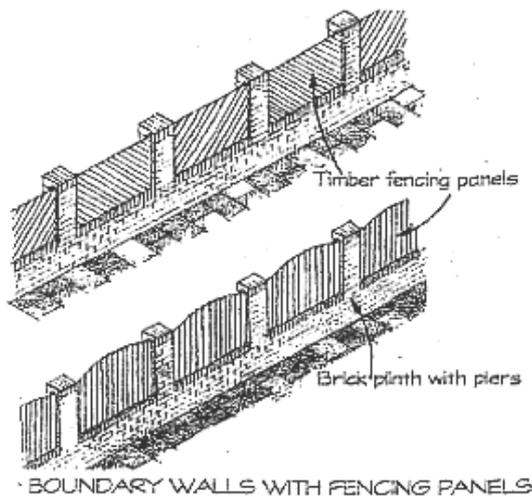
Important landscape features should be retained wherever possible. Where the loss of such a feature is unavoidable an appropriate replacement will normally be required.

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A hedgerow at the back of the pavement maintained to an appropriate height is a particularly appropriate treatment in many residential areas.



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#### 4. Extensions at the Front

Each site is unique and proposals will be determined on their own individual merits having regard to the local distinctive character of the area and the principles below.

In addition to this when assessing the impact of a proposal on neighbouring properties, some of the factors that consideration will be given to will include:

- Orientation;
- Changes in ground level; and
- Differences in building lines.

For example, particular care should be taken with a proposal that would obstruct the southerly aspects of an adjoining property or where the application sites ground level is higher than adjoining properties.

Proposals must be sympathetic and complimentary to their surroundings.

Adding extra space at the front of your house needs the most careful attention because of its potential impact upon the street scene.

#### Porches

The most usual and generally acceptable form of front extension is the storm porch. It should be possible to design a storm porch to meet the basic needs of shelter and insulation in front of a door within the prescribed dimensions for permitted development (see leaflet available). Porches larger than this will not generally be allowed unless there are specific instances.



General Principles

#### General Principles

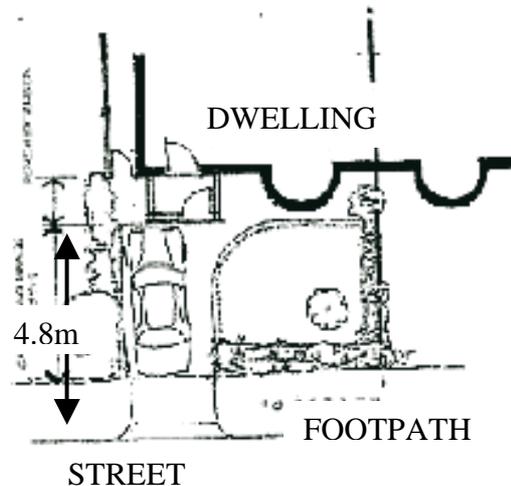
In addition to the factors mentioned above, consideration will be given to the following general principles.

Porches should be designed specifically to respect and maintain the local distinctive character of the area. Many properties have traditional and distinctive archways and features above doorways that contribute to the character of an area. Wherever possible, these features should not be obscured by unsympathetic porch and canopy designs.

Porches should be designed with mono-pitched or pitched roofs with roofing and facing materials that match the existing house. The erection of a pitched roof over an existing flat roof would normally be acceptable unless it would be particularly uncharacteristic in the area.

#### Parking Arrangements

Extensions should not reduce the effective garaging/parking provision at the dwelling to less than a standard off-road parking space at least 4.8m long. The highway conditions in the locality should also be recognised.



If you require the provision of a parking space in front of the extension it will normally need to be a minimum of 4.8m in length (or 5.5m to allow space for the opening of garage door). In every case the car must be clear of the highway. Spaces can be positioned at angles provided there is sufficient space for a car to park and this does not result in dangerous manoeuvring on the highway.

## Bay Windows

Bay windows are often a major distinguishing feature on the front of many older houses throughout the city.

However, they can give rise to maintenance problems which may require replacement of woodwork, re-roofing or even total rebuilding.

In almost all cases it is preferable to renew a bay window to follow its original form, using the same materials. However, where an existing bay has a flat roof the creation of a suitably designed pitched roof will generally be acceptable.

Where a house has an existing bay window or similar front feature, a clear separation between this feature and any proposed front extension should be retained. Proposals that link such features will normally be refused.



AVOID LINKING PORCHES AND BAYS

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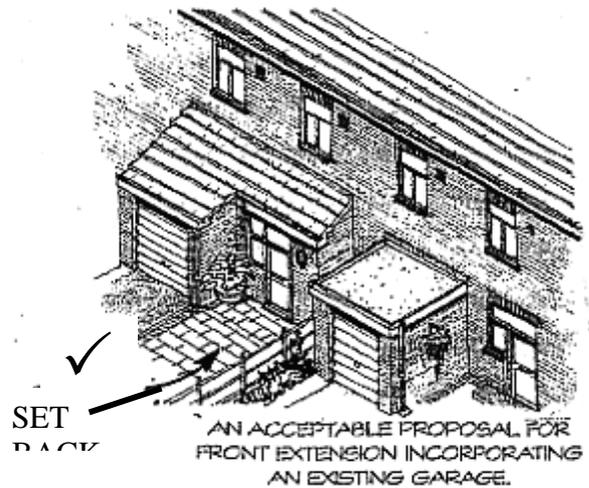
## Front Garage Extensions

Another popular form of front extension is to "square-off" the area at the front of the house where an existing integral garage projects forward.

This is often linked to replacing a flat roof over the garage, with a pitched roof. This is generally acceptable, but needs very careful consideration and designing to avoid detracting from the character of the property.

It is generally advisable not to bring the new extension right up to the existing garage front but to leave a minimum 225mm setback so as to retain some form of variation at the front particularly when the property forms part of a long terrace.

This setback allows for some variation in frontage treatment, e.g. the incorporation of a bow window. The extra eaves overhang will also create a light shade effect to retain the existing rhythm of the street.



The relationship between the proposed extension and any windows in neighbouring properties will be a key consideration in proposals for front extensions. The projection of front extensions may be restricted in order to reduce the impact upon neighbouring windows. Generally no front extension, which infringes a 45-degree line from the middle of a living room, kitchen or bedroom window (i.e. habitable room) in your neighbours' property, will be allowed.

Windows will not be permitted in the side elevations of extensions where overlooking into a neighbouring property could result. Obscure glazing or an appropriate boundary treatment will usually be required for proposed conservatories, which have predominantly glazed elevations.

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### **Extensions at the Rear**

Each site is unique and proposals will be determined on their own individual merits having regard to the local distinctive character of the area and the principles below.

In addition to this, when assessing the impact of a rear extension either single or two-storey, some of the factors that consideration will be given to will include:

- Orientation;
- Changes in ground level; and
- Differences in building lines.

For example, particular care should be taken with a proposal that would obstruct the southerly aspects of an adjoining property or where the application site's ground level is higher than adjoining properties.

Proposals must be sympathetic and complimentary to their surroundings

For many people living in a terraced house, a rear extension is the only way of enlarging their home.

Such extensions are also popular for semi-detached properties as they are usually the simplest way of improving the kitchen.

Although generally these extensions do not affect the street scene, there may be concern about visual intrusion and possible loss of privacy, outlook or daylight for your immediate neighbours.

#### **General Principles**

In addition to the factors mentioned above, consideration will be given to the following general principles.

When a stagger in the rear main building line between adjoining properties exists, it will normally be the practice to measure the projection from the original main wall of an affected neighbours property.

Proposals for two-storey rear extensions must not dominate the existing property and respect neighbouring properties.

Pitched or mono-pitched roofs will normally be required, particularly where proposals are visible from public vistas.

However, extensions on the rear of a house where the highest point of the mono-pitch roof runs along the boundary with a neighbour's property will not normally be permitted unless there is an adjoining extension. The impact of a roof design with a high ridge along a boundary can often have a detrimental impact upon a neighbouring property.

Regard will be given to adjoining or neighbouring properties, which already have extensions on the party boundary.

Windows will not be permitted in the side elevations of extensions where overlooking into a neighbouring property could result. Obscure glazing or an appropriate boundary treatment will usually be required for proposed conservatories, which have predominantly glazed elevations.

Proposals for conservatories that are located in prominent locations must include framing materials to match the existing frames of the windows and doors of the house.



#### **Single Storey Extensions**

- For single storey extensions the following guidelines should be observed:

The depth of the new extension should not exceed either:

- 3.3m (when measured externally) **or**
- impinge on an imaginary 45-degree sightline from the middle of the nearest window to a habitable room on your neighbours' property, **whichever gives the greater depth.**

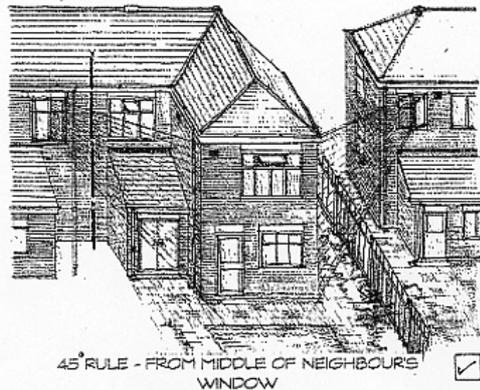
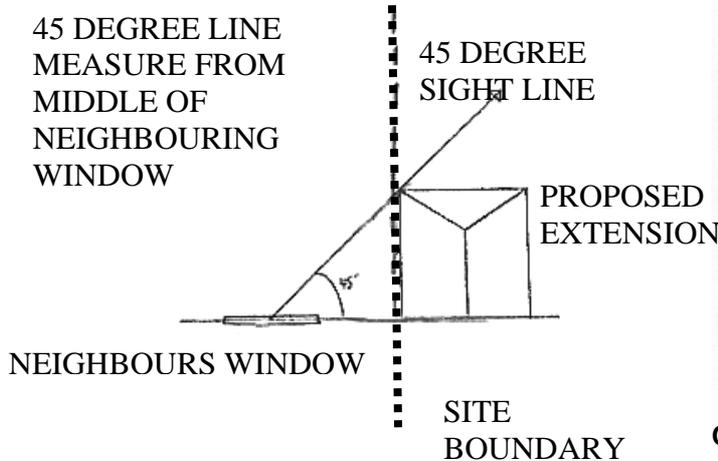
- To reduce a 'tunnelling' affect on the views from a neighbouring property it may be necessary to set rear extension off the boundary by at least 1m.

- A minimum window-to-window distance of 20m should be maintained between the rear

elevations of properties, which back onto each other. However, this may vary depending on differing site characteristics, for example changes in levels or the presence of trees along the boundary.

- Any extension into the private rear garden area should not unduly restrict the use of the rear garden for amenity purposes such as toddlers' play, clothes drying and sitting out, particularly where properties have existing small rear amenity areas. Normally a minimum of 30 sq m of rear garden should be retained.

- To reduce a 'tunnelling' affect on the views from a neighbouring property it may be necessary to set rear extension off the boundary by at least 1m.
- A minimum window-to-window distance of 20m should be maintained between the rear elevations of properties, which back onto each other. However, this may vary depending on differing site characteristics, for example changes in levels or the presence of trees along the boundary.



### Two-storey Rear Extensions

Two-storey rear extensions can seriously affect the outlook and light of adjoining properties. In the case of terraced properties, neighbours on both sides will be affected, whilst in the case of a semi-detached house problems usually occur in regard to the neighbour with whom you share a 'party wall'. There is likely to be more scope to extend at the rear with a detached property situated on a wider plot.

Generally a two-storey rear extension, which infringes a 45-degree line from the middle of the window of either of your neighbours' properties, will be refused.

However this requirement maybe relaxed in certain limited circumstances, for example where there is no adverse effect on windows to living rooms, kitchens or bedrooms (i.e. "habitable rooms") of the neighbouring property or the most affected window is an obscure glazed window to a bathroom, WC or to a hallway, landing or utility room i.e. a "non-habitable room".

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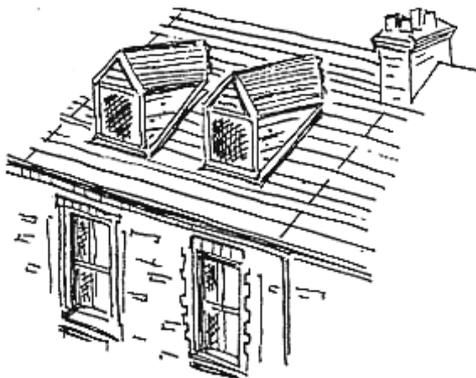
Coventry City Council

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## 6. Roof Extensions & Alterations

Each site is unique and proposals will be determined on their own individual merits having regard to the local distinctive character of the area and the principles below.

Proposals must be sympathetic and complimentary to their surroundings



*TRADITIONAL SMALL DORMERS WITH GABLE OR HIPPED ROOFS MAY BE ACCEPTABLE AT THE FRONT IN APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS*

### Dormer Windows

Loft conversions or rooms in the roof are often advertised as a simple solution to providing extra living space. However, when considering such an extension it is important to consider the Building Regulations concerning structural stability, structural fire precautions and means of escape, which apply to the provision of second floor residential accommodation.

The 1991 Building Regulations (as amended) has specific requirements concerning the conversion of roofs into rooms. Further information can be obtained from Building Control.

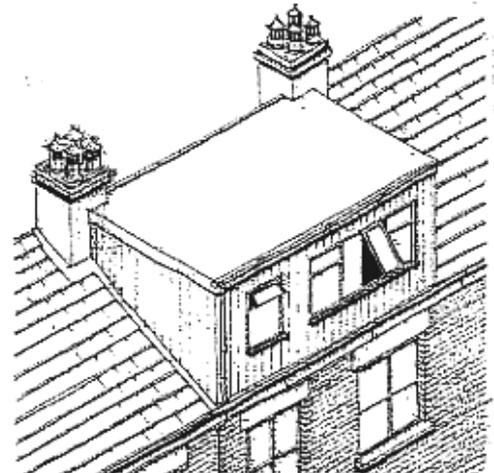
The provision of a suitable staircase may also take up valuable first floor living space.

In terms of their impact on the street scene roof extensions and alterations frequently raise serious concerns and can often have a significant adverse affect upon the urban character of an area.

## General Principles

In addition to the factors mentioned above, consideration will be given to the following general principles.

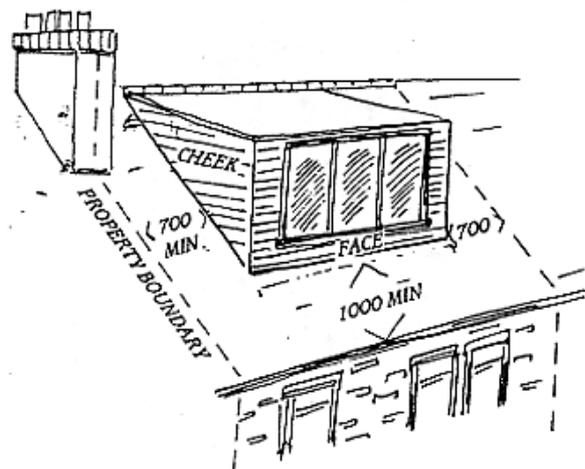
- Dormers on the front and side roof slopes are generally not acceptable unless they are part of an established local distinctive character.



**UNACCEPTABLE LARGE BOX DORMER ON FRONT OR REAR ROOF SLOPE**

- A dormer should only be placed on a roof slope that is not prominent when viewed from a street, a public footpath or open space.
- Large flat roofed dormers, including those that wrap around two roof slopes will be refused

*ACCEPTABLE BOX DORMER DESIGN - REAR ROOF SLOPES ONLY*



In the few locations where dormers are acceptable: -

- In order to reduce the scale, mass and proportion of the proposed dormer and to lessen the potential for overlooking, no dormer face should be erected within 1m of the eaves line of the house (as measured along the roof slope). Furthermore a minimum distance of 700mm between the dormer cheek and each side boundary of the property is required.
- All dormer windows, which are visible from public views should include pitched roofs.
- Dormer cheeks should be clad in materials to match the existing roof.
- It is good practice to ensure that dormers are set below the existing ridgeline and dormers extending above the existing highest ridgeline will be refused.

#### TWO ACCEPTABLE DESIGNS

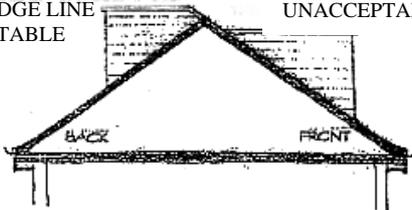
TRADITIONAL STYLE  
DORMER AT BACK  
WITH HIP ROOF -  
ACCEPTABLE



SMALL VELUX TYPE  
ROOF WINDOW AT  
FRONT - ACCEPTABLE

#### TWO UNACCEPTABLE DESIGNS

DORMER GOES  
ABOVE RIDGE LINE  
UNACCEPTABLE



LARGE BOX DORMER  
AT FRONT  
UNACCEPTABLE

Usually sloping roof light windows are cheaper to install and maintain and are less obtrusive than dormer windows. They will also reduce possible overlooking problems and will, unlike box dormers, generally be permitted development on roof slopes if of modest dimensions and only project a minimal distance beyond the existing roof slope.

#### Roof Extensions

Many areas are characterised by hipped roofs and the alteration of these to a gable can have a significant harmful effect on the streetscene as a whole. Where the character of an area consists of predominantly hipped roof designs, the conversion of an existing hipped end roof into a gable end will not be permitted. False hips will also be discouraged unless they are characteristic of the area.



UNACCEPTABLE EXTENSION TO HIPPED ROOF

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