Introduction

This document is one of a series giving design information on various topics and will form planning guidance supplementary to the Unitary Development Plan - First Review produced by the Council. It aims to provide a clear set of guidelines with appropriate illustrations of how major changes such as side and rear extensions, and loft conversions, should be designed. The examples given are only indicative of the Council's approach and are not intended to stifle sensitive and imaginative design.

The UDP informs the guidance set out in this document, and the concept of sustainable development (including the use of renewable resources) remains a priority to the Council, and applicants are encouraged to adhere to these principles. The guidance given below applies to the design of all house extensions irrespective of whether or not the proposal requires planning permission. However, because of the diversity of house styles within the Borough, it is neither possible nor desirable to cover every type of addition or eventuality. In conservation areas and with listed buildings and buildings of townscape merit greater care and attention is required and more restrictive policies may apply. The Council is concerned that the design and use of materials in domestic extensions should minimise energy use and pollution.

This document is divided into three sections. Section one gives a brief outline of the Legal Requirements and General Advice on obtaining planning permission followed by a section covering the Physical Constraints on development such as privacy, daylight/sunlight and visual impact. The main section covers Detailed Advice on the visual aspects of external design and appearance, dealing with the different elements (roof, windows, materials, etc) in an extension and how they should be designed to harmonise with the existing house.

Advice and Legal Considerations

Planning application – Not all extensions and external alterations to property require planning permission. Some may be permitted development (i.e. development not requiring planning permission). See the section on permitted development below.

General principles on planning applications – Whether or not an extension requires planning permission, plans must be deposited under the provisions of the Building Regulations, and the Planning and Building Control officers are available to offer advice (Refer to the section 'Further Information' at the end of the document).
To avoid unnecessary delays in dealing with planning applications it is important to submit scaled drawings (in metric measurements), which are clear and accurate.

Both existing and proposed elevations and floor plans are required. The elevations and outline plans of adjoining properties should also be shown on drawings, accurately scaled (in metric measurements). The submission of relevant photographs will aid the consideration of the application, and may result in a faster decision process.

It is also suggested that neighbours be consulted prior to submitting an application. The Council normally consults adjoining owners so that if you have previously discussed your scheme with them and taken into account their views it is less likely they will object. Failure to adhere to all above requirement is very likely to lead to delays in the planning applications.

Flats (Maisonette) – Flats and Maisonettes do not enjoy permitted planning development referred to below, and are likely to require planning permission (If there is doubt apply for a S192 Certificate, referred to in the ‘general checklist for Permitted Development’). If planning permission is required refer to the guidelines below.

Listed building or conservation area – It is particularly important to seek guidance if you live in a listed building or conservation area. The Urban Design Section, Development and Streetscene Department can give advice and assistance. (Refer to the section ‘Further Information’ at the end of the document for contact details).

Structural alterations – If structural alterations are involved (e.g. widening of window openings) plans must be deposited under the provisions of the Building Regulations and advice on such matters can be obtained from the Building Control Section in the Development and Streetscene Department. (Refer to the section ‘Further Information’ at the end of the document for contact details).

Discretionary grants – If you propose to carry out improvements to your property including the first time provisions of a bath or inside WC or works to remedy structural defects, discretionary grants may be available from the Council to assist with the cost. Enquiries on this point should be directed to the Environmental Health Department (refer to the section ‘Further Information’ at the end of the document).

Energy use – The Building Regulations 2000 contain specific requirements, including higher insulation standards for walls, floors and roofs from 1st April 2002. Details are available from the Building Control Section.

Permitted development – although many of the repairs and alterations mentioned below are permitted development (under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995) and do not therefore require planning permission, larger changes such as side or roof extensions may require planning permission.

Article 4(2) Directions – Where a particularly good group of dwellings are likely to be damaged if work, exempt from planning permission was carried out (e.g. changing windows; demolition of front boundary walls etc.) then the council may apply Article 4(2) Directions after consultation with the owners. Such directions mean that certain permitted development rights, as specified with the Direction, are removed and owners must then apply for permission to carry out such intended work. This does not mean that all development is unacceptable, but that they will all be carefully considered in the form of a planning application.

Further queries – Development Control team in the Development and Streetscene Department who deal with your area. (Refer to the section ‘Further Information’ at the end of the document for contact details)

General checklist for permitted development – An extension to a single family dwelling house (not a flat), provided it is not a listed building, is permitted development so long as:

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1. For all houses
   (a) the height of the extension does not exceed the highest part of the roof of the existing house;
   (b) no part of the extension projects out beyond any wall or roof plane that faces a highway (all public rights of way including public footpaths at the rear of properties);
   (c) no part of the extension (other than roof extensions) which is within 2 metres of any boundary exceeds 4 metres in height;
   (d) the area covered by buildings does not exceed 50% of the total area after excluding the ground area of the original house; and:

   EITHER

2. In addition to (1) all houses in conservation areas
   (a) the cubic content of the original house is not exceeded by more than 50 cubic metres or 10%, whichever is the greater of the two;
   (b) it does not involve the cladding of any part of the exterior with stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic or tiles;
   (c) it does not consist of an extension or alteration to its roof;

   OR

3. In addition to (1) & (2) terraced houses
   (a) the cubic content of the original house is not increased by more than 50 cubic metres or 10%, whichever is the greater;
   (b) in the case of an extension to the roof, the cubic content of the house is not increased by more than 40 cubic metres;

   OR

4. In addition to (1), (2) & (3) semi-detached and detached
   (a) the cubic content of the original house is not exceeded by more than 70 cubic metres or 15%, whichever is the greater of the two;
   (b) in the case of an extension to the roof, the cubic content of the house is not increased by more than 50 cubic metres;

   OR

5. Outbuildings (including conservatories) are viewed as extensions (if they are within 5 metres of the house) for the purpose of the above allowances.

Note that all buildings built or extended by the end of 1948 are considered to be original. For queries concerning any of the points or details raised please contact the Development and Streetscene Department who will give advice and assistance (for contact details refer to the section ‘Further Information’ at the end of the document). Additional guidance on completion of application forms and the fees payable is also available.

If you believe you do not need planning permission for the proposal, you are recommended to apply for a certificate of lawful development under S192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This is a useful official document to have for house sale purposes.

You will normally still require Building Regulations for such work. You may also need to enter into a party wall agreement with your neighbour(s) dealt with through privately employed surveyors not administered by the council.

Physical Constraints

These guidelines are concerned with protecting the amenities of houses immediately adjoining a proposed extension, but their application and importance will vary according to the position and size of the extension and the type of property being extended. (see Figure 1)
Privacy – a new extension should not result in any substantial loss of privacy to adjoining dwellings and gardens.

To prevent overlooking, windows should either be high level or omitted from any wall directly facing a neighbouring house or garden.

Using the roof of an extension, as a balcony, will normally be unacceptable.

Where houses are terraced or have small gardens the construction of a larger dormer window in the roof can seriously reduce privacy. Minimise overlooking by restricting the size of window, setting it back from the eaves.

Daylight and Sunlight and Visual Impact

The effect of a single storey extension on daylight and sunlight is usually acceptable if the projection is no further than 3m for terraced, 3.5m for semi-detached and 4m for detached houses. However the final test of acceptability will depend on the particular circumstances on the site which may justify greater rear projections (e.g. the distance from the neighbouring properties or the presence of existing buildings or features on adjoining sites which reduces the impact of the proposal).

The extension should not cause any significant loss of daylight or sunlight to habitable rooms or gardens in neighbouring properties, and there should be adequate daylight within the extension and to adjacent rooms in the existing dwelling. In deciding the acceptability of the extension in terms of reducing Daylight and Sunlight to neighbouring properties, the council will be guided by the British Research Establishment standards.

Extensions should not appear overbearing when seen from the gardens and rooms of adjoining houses. (However planning legislation does not protect particular views from a house).

Amenity Space – extensions should not lead to a substantial percentage reduction in garden area and with small gardens the size of extension may be restricted to retain a usable open space.

General – in order to meet the above objectives it may be advantageous to keep the extensions away from the boundary. Two storey rear extensions to terrace and semi-detached houses are rarely satisfactory because of their adverse effect on daylight and outlook. Corner sites will require special care because of their effect on the street scene and the need to retain vehicle ‘sight lines’. Extensions involving the loss of parking will not normally be opposed as long the extensions meet with Council parking standards.

Detailed Advice – External design and appearance

Guiding principles

The external appearance of any extension must be carefully designed in order to avoid the visual confusion that can result when the style and materials of the original house are ignored.

Reflect existing character/ detail – the decoration, proportions and detailing of older buildings are frequently superior to that of new ones. Attempts to improve houses often spoil the original work through gimmicky or cheap solutions (see Figure 2). Although it is usually easier and more
successful to copy the appearance of the existing house, your architect may suggest a contrasting design using different materials, which remains sympathetic to the overall appearance.

Ensure continuity of the whole – the essence of visual success is to look at the street as a whole, and through an appreciation of the original design and construction, blend repairs and new work into the existing house. A well-designed extension, which sympathetically complements the existing house and is in character with the neighbourhood, is likely to add more value to the property than an inappropriate design.

Retain original – the guiding principle should be to try and retain everything that is original and accept the style and qualities of the cottage or house for what they are. Don’t just change things for the sake of change but seek real improvements, which enhance the quality of the building. The original appearance should always be the reference point when considering any changes.

Return house to original – where a house has already been unsympathetically modernised and you are considering further changes, the aim should be to return the house to its original appearance rather than repeat previous mistakes.

There is a variety of ways in which the living accommodation of a single-family house can be extended. The most common are side and rear extensions, either one or two storeys in height, and roof extensions including dormer windows.

Side and rear extensions

Form and location – The overall shape, size and position of side and rear extensions should not dominate the existing house or its neighbours. They should harmonise with the original appearance, which should be taken as the starting point for any future changes.

There are two alternative methods of achieving this aim.
(a) The extension is integrated with the house (see Figure 3) which can work well with detached houses and sometimes on the end of uniform terraces.
(b) Alternatively, the extension is made to appear as an obvious addition which is subordinate to the main structure, so that the original form can still be appreciated (see Figure 4). This method is appropriate for a house which forms part of a larger symmetrical building such as a semi-detached pair.

Avoid side extensions that project beyond the existing front elevation – Where the extension is to be subordinate to the existing house it is usually desirable to set back the extension by at least 1 metre behind the front elevation (see Figure 5).

Avoid infilling – In order to retain the rhythm and character of a street the complete infilling of spaces between pairs of semi-detached houses should be avoided wherever possible. Another issue is that the views to the landscape behind the buildings are blocked when the gaps between the pairs of semi-detached houses are completely filled. A gap of approximately 1 metre between the side-wall of the extension and the boundary fence will normally be required (see Figure 5). Full-height side extensions can be obtrusive and are difficult to integrate with the design of the existing house. They should be avoided where the gap between the houses is an important element in the streetscape. The construction of a new side extension should preferably not result in a loss of off-street parking.
Walls – Walls are the largest and most visually important element in a house, and any change will therefore dramatically alter the character and appearance of both the individual house and the street as a whole.

- Retain original brickwork – bricks are the predominant materials used in the Borough and should never be painted or rendered unless absolutely necessary. If outside brickwork is in such poor condition that rendering is the only answer, seek expert advice on the colour and texture. Depending on the location, pebble-dash, spatter dash or Tyrolean finishes are generally inappropriate. Like render, using paint on facing bricks is an irreversible step which will totally alter the appearance and could lead to conflict amongst neighbours who still value the colour of the original brickwork and street character. Avoid highlighting the pointing between bricks.

- Match existing work – when repair or rebuilding occurs it is important to use bricks, bonding or pointing that matches the existing. Care must be taken to use a mortar that is not too strong (1:1:6 cement, lime and sand) and to lightly brush the pointing to texture it before it sets. Distinctive brick or tile patterns, keystones, mouldings, terracotta details and other applied ornament should be kept. These decorative features are applied in order to draw attention to parts of the building and it is this small-scale detail which gives the house much of its character. (see Figure 6)

- Retain visual continuity – the harmony of a terrace or street with a consistent facing material should not be destroyed with an assortment of diverse treatments. There are very few stone or timber buildings within the Borough and it is therefore generally inappropriate to use reconstituted stone cladding and plastic or timber boarding. (see Figure 2)

Windows – Windows are important features and an inappropriate choice can easily spoil an otherwise satisfactory design. Adding an extension with different windows from those used on the original house may provide for a particular need but will do little to create a well-mannered unified exterior.

- Maintain consistent detail – in most cases use the same kind of window throughout, with the proportions and sizes of new window openings generally echoing those of the main house.

- Line up new detail with existing – new lintel and cill heights should line up with those around existing openings.

- Maintain consistent style – changing the internal divisions (mullions, transoms and pane shapes and sizes) within the window can completely alter the effect of the overall proportions. Ensure that new windows reflect the style and details of the existing windows.

- Repair or replace with same/similar – when an original window requires attention the best course of action wherever possible is to repair. If, however, the window is beyond repair it should be replaced with a window of the same shape, size and design.

- Avoid mixing styles – mixing different types of window on the front elevation should be avoided. (see Figure 7)

- Retain character – by modern living standards some older houses may be considered to be under-lit. A common, but normally unsatisfactory method of increasing day lighting is to insert a bow window, which invariably looks very out of place. With sash and casement windows it is better to add single or double width lights at either side. (see Figure 8)

- Historic replacement – if a bow window is necessary it should be made only after seeking specialist advice on authentic detailing. Late Victorian and Edwardian bays should be retained or replaced in their original form. Removing them spoils the
individual house and the street. Be very careful in selecting replacement windows because many products are available which although claiming to represent a particular age (e.g. Georgian) bear little resemblance to authentic examples.

Modern replacement – in recent years there has been considerable growth in window replacement companies selling modern aluminium or uPVC. For front elevations these are only acceptable when the replacement exactly matches the size and design of the original window. Original dormer windows should never be changed for larger replacements in a more modern style. Timber is always preferable because uPVC can never fully replicate the original appearance and is unsustainable. Aluminium is a preferred alternative to uPVC as it more closely matches the design of the original timber windows.

Avoid fixing outside shutters to windows unless they are purely functional. The effect of these is to adversely alter the balance and proportion of the windows.

Avoid using fake bulls eye panes in any form of window because they are an inappropriate historical detail.

Roof extensions – all roof extensions will be considered on their merits but in general:

Avoid roof extensions in the front of a house – it is undesirable to add roof extension (including dormers) to the front of a house, particularly when there is already a gable over a projecting bay. Excessive use of rooflights (in pitched roofs in particular) is not recommended as it can be visually disruptive.

Keep roof extensions ‘in- scale’ with the existing structure; the overall width of dormers should not exceed their height and the window opening size should be smaller than that of windows of the floor below.

Avoid dominant roof extensions – dormer windows and other roof extensions must not project above the ridgeline or dominate the original roof.

Normally a significant area of the existing roof should be left beneath a new window and on either side of the dormer thus setting the extension well in from either side of the roof. (see Figure 9)

Keep existing profiles – dormer windows should not wrap round two sides of a hip roof and interrupt the roof profile (see Figure 10). Ensure that dormers are modest in scale in relation to the roof.

Ensure sensitivity to the existing character – a dormer window with a flat roof may be out of character with the original building. Hip or gabled dormers are often preferable, or alternatively consider using roof lights. However, in order to create sufficient internal headroom, it may be acceptable as a compromise to have a small dormer with a flat roof.

Match/ or use complementary materials: the sides of dormer windows should be covered in materials that match or complement the main roof.

Roof lights: it is preferable that roof lights are flush with the existing roof (‘heritage’ style) and that they are not randomly placed.

Hip to Gable extensions – An extension that results in the conversion of an existing hip roof into a gabled roof is not desirable and will not be encouraged. This is especially so when
the roof-scape and space between the buildings are important features of the character of that part of the road. The Council will however judge each application on its own merit.

Doors - The front door is an integral part of the house, which should be in keeping with its overall style, age and character, and the correct type will therefore vary accordingly.

- Avoid full-length glass front doors: depending on the age and style of the house, full-length glass front doors should generally be avoided.
- Avoid using modern pastiches of classical doorway detailing. Mock Georgian pediments, cornices, pilasters and pillars are nearly always inappropriate. Fanlights are also important period details and should be kept as near as possible to their original form.
- Avoid fussy standard ‘period’ doors that are out of character with the rest of the house. A pseudo Gothic, Elizabethan, 12 panel, bow or Tudor door inserted in a Victorian cottage or modern town house will be out of keeping. (see Figure 11)

Porches - Adding a porch or canopy is one of the most significant changes a householder can make to the front of a house as it involves altering the shape of the house at its focal point, the entrance.

- Planning permission will be required for a porch if it exceeds 3 square metres, is over 3 metres high or is less than 2 metres from the public highway.
- Retain visual continuity – the risk of creating an eyesore is greatest within a terrace where a single glass, timber or brick box on the front of a house can spoil the look of the whole row, and different porches are almost certain to appear later on. A plain rectangular box with a flat roof is generally an unsatisfactory shape to attach to a traditional building. (see Figure 12)
- Match existing work – if a new porch is desired, it should enhance rather than detract from the original house, with the aim being to make the addition ‘belong’ to the house.

Materials – In general, a standard condition of a planning permission will require that the materials used on the external elevation shall match those of the existing building.

- Integrate to existing – external materials should normally match those already found on the house. The aim is to integrate the extension with the original house keeping the number of materials used to a minimum. Avoid unrelated and incompatible materials. (see Figure 12)
- Match existing work – extensions to recently built houses should be constructed in the same materials as
originally used, if they are still available. With older houses the existing materials will have changed colour and texture due to age and weather and it may not be possible to achieve a perfect match. To overcome the problem of bonding old and new brickwork it is advisable to set the extension back behind the face of the existing house. It is also important with brick extensions to match the mortar colour, bonding and pointing.

- Retain visual continuity – on terraced and semi-detached houses, or in a road of similar houses, avoid refacing the existing house in either paint, render or cladding (so as to match the finish of the extension) because this will be disruptive to the overall appearance of the street.

- Use quality materials – using cheap poor quality materials will not only be less attractive and limit the increase in the value of the house, but in the long term is likely to result in higher maintenance costs.

**Roofs** – The choice of roof is very important because the type will determine the overall shape of the extension.

- Maintain existing style – it is generally desirable to use a pitched roof on all two storey, side or rear extensions and is especially important with those at road junctions or in corner locations. Ideally, a single storey extension to an existing house with a pitched roof should also have a pitched roof because the resulting shape is likely to be more compatible with that of the main building.

- Avoid converting a side-hipped roof to a gable, if hipped roofs are part of the streets' character, it changes the house profile dramatically and changes the profile of the gaps between the houses.

- Avoid using fake-pitched roofs along the front wall of an extension.

- Match eaves & pitch – the eaves of two storey side and rear extensions should line up with those of the existing house and the pitch of the roof should also be similar.

- Match existing materials – with pitched roofs the colour and shape of new tiles or slates should match those of the existing roof. This is particularly important when the new roof connects directly into the existing. Where this occurs it will be possible to re-use some tiles from where the roof connection is made. Alternatively tiles could be removed from the back of the house to use on the front of the new extension and new materials used to replace them. If cheaper concrete tiles have to be used they should blend in colour, size and profile with the existing roofing material. Decorative ridge tiles and roof tile patterns should be retained. If gutters or water pipes need replacing use black rather than grey.
Re-use materials – many older houses in the Borough have slate roofs that should be retained wherever possible. Usually between 25% and 50% of slates can be reused if care is taken in their removal.

Chimney stacks and pots:

- Try to retain all chimney-stacks and pots, and where necessary repair them in a style and material, which reflect the original. All chimney pots should ideally be of a similar size and design.

- Retain visual continuity – the regular spacing of chimneys contributes to the rhythm of the street and is particularly important in terraced streets and those on hills where the roofline is more visible. (see Figure 13)

- Keep corbelled courses of brickwork and don’t use smooth render or an inappropriate pre-cast concrete capping. (see Figure 14)

- Ensure neat demolition of a chimney – if it is absolutely necessary to demolish a chimney take it down below roof level and repair the roof covering. Do not leave an unsightly, stubby rendered base protruding just above the roof. (Lowering the height of an active chimney may reduce its effectiveness). (see Figure 15)

- Retain the use of chimneys – if unused fireplaces are fitted with grilles and the pots with ventilating top cowls, chimneys can remain useful by providing controllable ventilation.

Details

- Retain any decorative and ornamental architectural details in stone, cut, rubbed or glazed brick, terracotta, ceramic, stucco and wood which give your home its own distinct character.

- Maintain authentic detail – take great care in adding features to give individuality to a house. Ensure that the details match up to the age, style and quality of the property and try to avoid shoddy, phoney or ‘folksy’ additions.

- Avoid undermining the continuity and harmony that have been obtained by complying with the principles discussed so far. The position of rainwater pipes and gutters, and the continuation of plinths, brick string courses, fascias and other details must not be overlooked if the extension is to be visually successful.

Decoration

- Understate rather than overstate – if a house is stuccoed or rendered and needs a face lift, smooth texture paints are preferable. Avoid bold bright colours and finishes where they look out of place and clash with neighbouring houses. If the house is part of a semi-detached pair try to ensure that both halves are painted the same colour. Where whole facades are stuccoed the best overall appearance is achieved by agreeing a co-ordinated colour scheme.

- Avoid the use of shuttering (for decorative purposes) unless it is functional and part of the existing character of the house.

- Generally window frames, glazing bars, fascia beads and window reveals should be painted white.

- Traditionally exterior pipes and ironwork on balconies and railings are painted black. However, if there is an excessive number of obtrusive external pipes, it may be advisable to choose a colour which merges rather than contrasts with the walls.
Further Information

Construction/ alterations to a listed building or in a conservation area – if you are planning to do any work in a conservation area or on a sensitive site, the Heritage Information service could be helpful in selecting the right expertise for the job.

Contact details for the Heritage Service:
Heritage Information
Building Conservation Centre Trust
15 Kensington Palace Gardens
London
W 8 4Q G

E- mail: info@heritageinformation.org.uk
Tel: 020 7243 5888
Fax: 020 7243 5889

Contact numbers at the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames:
Development control
E-mail: envprotection@richmond.gov.uk

Planning Support Centre for Development Control Inquires
Tel: 020 8891 7300

Environmental Health
Tel: 020 8891 7892

Building Control
Tel: 020 8891 7356/7357

Urban Design
Tel: 020 8891 7335
If you need this leaflet in Braille, large print, audio tape, or another language, please contact us on

020 88917322 or
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