

# House Extensions



## This Guide

provides advice about the way planning applications for house extensions in the Borough of Charnwood will be judged. This includes advice about the design and appearance of extensions and their impact on the enjoyment of neighbouring properties.

## Policy Background

When deciding planning applications, the most important issues to take into account are any relevant planning policies.

The *Leicestershire Structure Plan*, the development plan, does not contain any specific policies about house extensions.

The *Borough of Charnwood Local Plan* contains a policy, Policy H/15, about extensions to dwellings. It indicates that planning permission will be granted only where the development meets the following four criteria:

- it remains compatible in scale, mass, design and use of materials with the original dwelling;
- it would not appear as an intrusive or incongruous feature in the street scene to the detriment of visual amenities;
- it would not prove detrimental to the amenities of occupiers of nearby properties by reason of overshadowing, dominance, or substantial loss of privacy or light;
- it would not involve the removal of areas of existing landscaping important to the character of the location.

This guidance note provides detailed advice to supplement this policy and explains the way in which the impact of house extensions on the environment will be considered. It

also updates and replaces existing guidance about the design of extensions contained in the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan.

*Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs)* 1 and 3 contain government advice on design issues. In addition, a DETR publication, *By Design*, published in 2000, gives general advice about how local authorities should approach design issues.

## **General Background**

In dealing with proposals for house extensions, our aim is to make sure the extension is in keeping with the existing property and the surrounding area and to minimise any adverse affect on neighbours. Although some small extensions and other minor domestic works may not need planning permission, the Council hopes that in all cases householders will take into account the advice in this guide. This should produce better designs, improve property values and promote neighbour relations.

## **Information to be included with planning applications for house extensions**

The Council will expect all planning applications for house extensions to be accompanied by four copies of the following information:

1. a site plan which is accurate and is adequate to easily identify the application site. This should preferably be an extract from an Ordnance Survey plan. The application site should be clearly marked in red, with any adjoining land owned or controlled by the applicant edged in blue;
2. detailed drawings, preferably to a scale of 1:50 showing floor plans and elevations; and
3. a block plan, preferably to a scale of 1:200, showing clearly the existing property, the proposed extension and neighbouring properties. The plan should show the positions of all existing and proposed door and window openings, adjacent roads, any boundary features and any landscaping. The area to be used for parking should be shown on the plan.

This information will allow councillors, planning officers, neighbours and anyone consulted about the application to judge the impact on its surroundings.

When an application is received, the Council will write to neighbouring properties asking whether they wish to comment. It often helps if applicants explain their proposals to neighbours before making a planning application. Points which are unclear can be clarified and changes can be considered which may overcome any concerns of neighbours.

Expert advice from an architect, planning consultant or other professional agent will improve the likelihood of an approval.

## **Guidelines to be used when assessing proposals for house extensions**

### **The Design of any House Extension**

House extensions can affect the appearance and character of both the property being extended and the surrounding area in general. A property with an extension which is well designed and in character will have a better appearance, making it more attractive at the time of any sale.

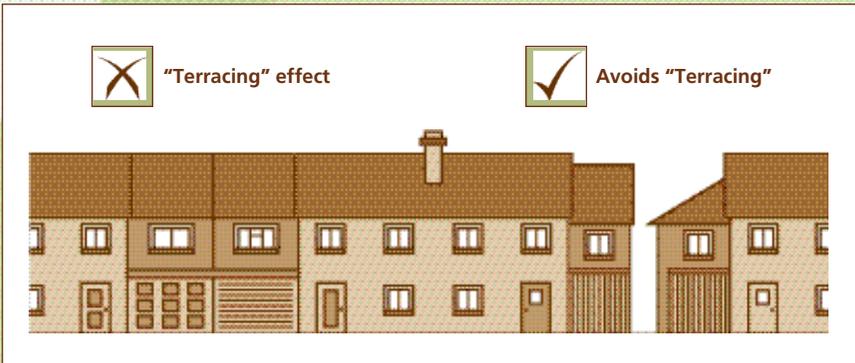
The first stage in the design process is to look at the character of the surrounding area. This should include finding out whether the property is in a conservation area or whether there are "listed buildings" nearby. The Council gives extra consideration to proposals which affect such areas or buildings. An architect or other qualified designer should be employed to prepare any detailed proposal, particularly if the site is located in a sensitive area. Although planning staff will give general design advice, it is not part of their job to draw up detailed plans.

The **character of the area** depends on many different things. The arrangement of buildings is important - are the houses detached, semi-detached or in terraces, are they well spaced,

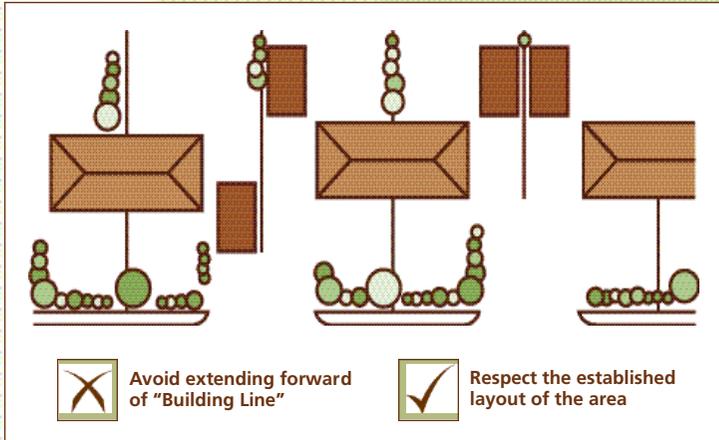
are they built up to the road, etc? The mix of buildings and their height affect the appearance of the area while the type of materials used may also be an important influence. There may be common design features, such as decorative brickwork, bay windows, dormers or hipped roofs in the area. If the area has an obvious character, any house extension should be designed to reflect this. Introducing unusual design features into an area is usually undesirable.

The spaces between and around buildings can be important. Extensions which fill the gaps between houses can change the whole character of the area. One example is where extensions to semi-detached houses create a "terracing effect". Setting back an extension from the front line of the house and/or using a different roof form can be ways to overcome this effect.

It sometimes helps for neighbours to consider a joint approach if they are planning to extend. Often it is easier to find an appropriate design and the process is normally quicker and cheaper.



Some streets have a well-defined "building line" and this can be important to the character and appearance of the area. A new building which does not follow this line can break up the street scene and change the fundamental character of the area. For example, building a garage in front of the main wall of the house is likely to look out of place where there is a line of houses and where garages are generally sited in rear gardens. What is important is that any new building should blend in with the form and appearance of existing buildings.



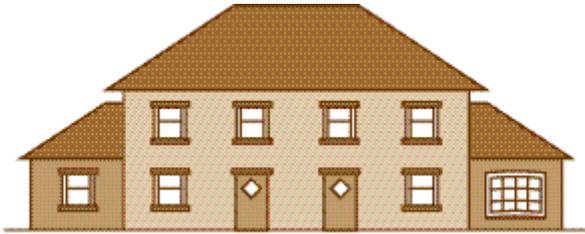
Once the character of the area has been considered, the next step is to look at the appearance and character of the property to be extended. Any extension should respect the basic **shape and size** of the existing property. The shape, pitch and style of the roof will be of particular importance.



Extensions should be designed so that the main property is still the dominant building. The roof and eaves line should be lower than the existing house. Setting back the extension behind the front wall of the existing house can often help to achieve a satisfactory design.

The **materials** to be used to construct an extension need careful selection. Normally, it is best to use matching materials. It is not only the colour and tone which must match but also the size and texture. For older properties, this is sometimes difficult and appropriate second hand materials may not be available. Sometimes, setting one wall slightly behind another can help to reduce any apparent difference in colour or size. The use of a contrasting material to clearly define the existing and new work may be considered if matching materials cannot be found.

The size, style and proportion of **doors and windows** need to follow those used in the existing property. If too many openings are included, the balance of the building may be upset as there may be too much window area compared to brickwork. Windows with different sizes and patterns of panes on the same wall create an unsettling and unbalanced appearance.



An overlarge window is unsympathetic



Style of windows should match those on original house





**Windows in the roof** can be one useful way of opening up extra floor space. Unless there are existing dormers in the area, they should be avoided. Rooflights provide an alternative. If dormers are used, they should be as small as possible. They should match the window style and roof pitch of the existing property. Dormers should be kept as low as possible. Dormers which are higher than the ridge line of the existing property are unlikely to be acceptable. Ones which approach the ridge line may also be unacceptable in prominent or sensitive locations. In general, keep any dormers and rooflights to those areas which are most difficult to see.





Some properties have attractive detailing. Examples include decorative brickwork and fancy timber bargeboards. Including similar details on an extension can help it to blend in.

### **The Impact of any House Extension on Neighbours**

Extensions need to be designed to provide and maintain adequate light to both the property to be extended and neighbouring properties. Although there is no right to a view over someone else's land, buildings which dominate the outlook from a property can have a serious impact. Sunlight and daylight are essential to the enjoyment of living. Most people value light in buildings and outdoors. The sun makes rooms bright and cheerful and improves peoples' spirits. Sunlight entering a building is also an important source of heat, particularly during the winter and reduces the need for artificial lighting. Sunlight is important not only as a way of improving the quality of life but also as a way of reducing energy needs.

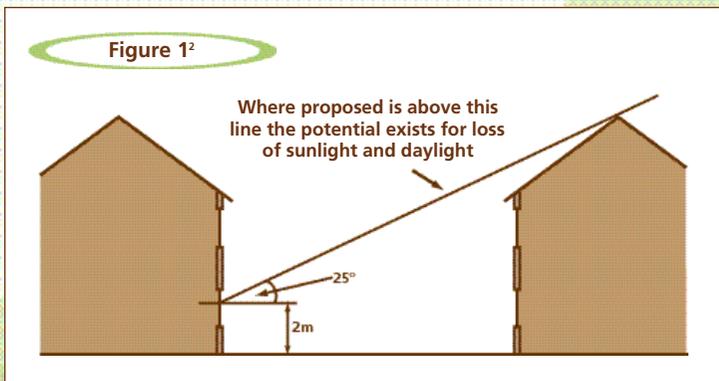
Light is important to both rooms in houses and gardens. The Council has adopted standards<sup>1</sup> regarding space between buildings. These standards include a minimum 'back to back' distance of 30 metres. This is reduced to 14 metres between walls which contain windows to main rooms and a blank gable end or flank wall. Where possible, layouts should avoid back to back relationships to minimise loss of privacy. Private gardens should be a minimum of 75 square metres as this provides both a minimum amount of open space and a separation of buildings. The erection of extensions to houses can result in the area of garden being reduced to an extent where this standard is not met. This guide is

intended to help judge the impact of such extensions on sunlight and daylight and on amenity space.

## Sunlight

The siting of house extensions needs to be carefully planned to avoid overshadowing and loss of potential solar heat.

Loss of sunlight can be a cause of major concern for neighbours and may result in rooms feeling colder and less cheerful. Problems are likely to occur when some part of the proposal is within 90 degrees of a south facing window on an existing property and where the height exceeds the 25 degree angle as indicated in Figure 1.



Loss of sunlight to living rooms and conservatories is of greatest concern - bedrooms are of less importance. It is possible to calculate the percentage loss using technical calculations available from the Building Research Establishment.

Sunlight is just as important for **gardens** as for dwellings. The area of garden closest to the house is the most important. The Building Research Establishment suggests<sup>3</sup> that no more than 40%, and preferably no more than 25%, of any garden should receive no sunlight on March 21. This date is the official first day of spring.

When considering planning applications for house extensions, the Council will take into account the need:

- for access by occupiers and neighbours to sunlight for main rooms; and
- for exposure to direct sun lighting of private gardens.

***The Council will grant planning permission for house extensions only where the proposal will not result in a substantial loss of sunlight to main rooms or the private gardens of adjoining dwellings.***

## Daylight

The daylight in a room will be affected if extensions are large and close to existing windows.

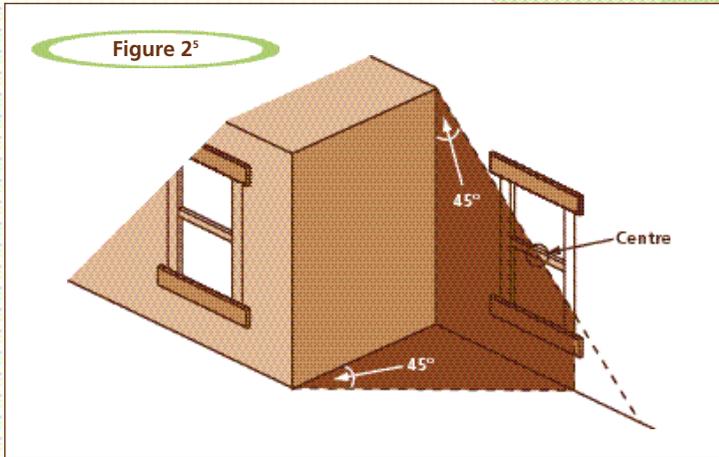
The more a building is extended the greater the impact will be on the daylight to adjacent buildings. A single storey extension along a common boundary with a semi-detached house is likely to be acceptable where it does not exceed 2.5 metres in length. Any extension greater in length will need very careful consideration. Although it may be possible to construct a larger extension without planning permission, the Council hopes that householders will follow the guidance contained here.

Particular care needs to be taken to avoid creating a tunnel effect where windows are set back behind extensions projecting out either side. Setting an extension in from the boundary can help reduce problems of loss of daylight.

Occupiers of dwellings may have a right to light by virtue of the length of time which unobstructed windows have existed. However, this is not a planning matter and cannot be used as a reason to refuse planning permission. A Solicitor may be able to give further advice on this issue.

In dealing with any planning application to extend, an assessment needs to be made about the likely loss of daylight to any adjacent room. Clearly the loss of daylight will depend on the position and size of the proposed extension in relation to existing windows.

The Building Research Establishment suggests<sup>4</sup> a method of assessing the affect on daylight of an extension running at right angles to the wall in which the affected window is sited. It is illustrated in Figure 2.



First draw a line diagonally down at an angle of 45 degrees from the top of the extension where it meets the wall in which the affected window is sited. Then draw a line diagonally back along the level of the ground at an angle of 45 degrees from the bottom of the extension at its greatest projection. If the centre of a window to a habitable room would be closer to the extension than both of these lines, then there is likely to be a significant reduction in light entering the room served by that window.

***The Council will grant planning permission for house extensions only where the proposal will not result in a substantial loss of sunlight to main rooms of adjoining dwellings.***

## Planning Conditions

The Council will only refuse planning permission for house extensions where there are good planning reasons. In many cases, a grant of planning permission will include conditions. Conditions are imposed to protect the environment and to safeguard the living conditions of neighbours.

Where a proposal is considered unacceptable, the Council will normally try to negotiate changes to overcome the planning objections. A planning condition will be included in such cases to make sure that only the amended scheme is built.

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<sup>1</sup> Design Guidance: Space Standards around Buildings in New Housing Areas - Supplementary Planning Guidance attached to the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan.

<sup>2</sup> This illustration is used with the permission of the Building Research Establishment.

<sup>3</sup> "Site layout for sunlight and solar gain": P J Littlefair. BRE Information Paper IP4/92.

<sup>4</sup> "Site layout planning for daylight": P J Littlefair. BRE Information Paper IP5/92.

<sup>5</sup> This illustration is used with the permission of the Building Research Establishment.

## Further Information

Further information is contained in the following publications:

***Site layout for sunlight and solar gain. (1992)***

P J Littlefair. BRE Information Paper IP4/92.  
Building Research Establishment.

***Site layout planning for daylight. (1992)***

P J Littlefair. BRE Information Paper IP5/92.  
Building Research Establishment.

***Site layout planning for daylight and sunlight: a guide to good practice. (1991)***

P J Littlefair.  
Building Research Establishment.

The Building Research Establishment is located at Garston, Watford. WD2 7JR. ([www.bre.co.uk](http://www.bre.co.uk))

Charnwood Borough Council acknowledges the help of the Building Research Establishment in allowing use of the illustrations contained in this note as Figure 1 and 2.

By Design (2000)

DETR and the Commission for Architecture & the Built Environment.

If you need further advice, please contact the planning service at Southfields, Loughborough - telephone 01509 634744 (north including Loughborough, Shepshed, Woodhouse, Quorn, Barrow and the Wolds) or 01509 634737 (south including the rest of Charnwood Forest, Seagrave, Sileby, Mountsorrel, Rothley and the villages south towards Leicester).

**The planning service can also provide details of :**

- your local councillor
- contacts for the Town and Parish Councils and Parish Meetings
- a list of planning consultants based in the area

**Free advice may be available from:**

- the Citizens' Advice Bureau, John Storer House, Southfield Road, Loughborough - 01509 267374.
- Planning Aid, a service run by the Royal Town Planning Institute for people who cannot afford a planning consultant or other professional agent – we can provide contact details.

There is a possibility of a small grant being available towards the cost of repairs required for the preservation or enhancement of traditional buildings in sensitive locations such as conservation areas.. However, the design must reflect the historic character and appearance of the building. For further information, please ring 01509 634748.

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