

DESIGN GUIDE TO HOUSE EXTENSIONS

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Adopted, March 2021



www.reading.gov.uk



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Contents

1.0	Introduction	3
2.0	Planning Policy Context.....	3
3.0	Permitted development	4
4.0	Climate change	5
5.0	Preparing an application.....	5
6.0	Assessment criteria and considerations	6
6.1	Impact on existing dwelling	6
6.1.1	Size and scale.....	6
6.1.2	Outdoor amenity	7
6.2	Impact on neighbouring properties.....	7
6.2.1	Boundaries	7
6.2.2	Overlooking, overshadowing and overbearing	7
6.3	The natural environment	8
6.3.1	The Green Network	8
6.3.2	Topography	8
6.4	The street scene and the surrounding area	8
6.4.1	Fenestration	8
6.4.2	Materials and detailing.....	8
6.4.3	Existing development patterns.....	9
7.0	Specific extension type guidance	10
7.1	Rear extensions	10
7.2	Side extensions.....	12
7.3	Dormer extensions	15
7.4	Front extensions and porches	17
7.5	Upwards extensions.....	18
7.6	Buildings in the garden.....	18
7.7	Ancillary accommodation	18
7.8	Windows and doors	19
7.9	Fences and walls	19
7.10	Hard surfaces in gardens.....	19
8.0	Contacts and pre-application advice	20
	Building Control	20
9.0	Glossary	20
10.0	References and other useful guidance.....	21

1.0 Introduction

- 1.0.1 The purpose of this document is to help those considering applying for planning permission to extend their home and those employed to submit planning applications for others. The advice it contains is based on the principles of good design and is relevant to the majority of house extensions including any exempt from requiring permission by virtue of being [permitted development](#).
- 1.0.2 This document provides guidance to supplement adopted planning policies. Your planning application will always be assessed on its merits against adopted policy, taking any other relevant material considerations into account. There may be other factors which have to be considered over and above the general guidelines e.g. trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order, or listed buildings or conservation areas.
- 1.0.3 If planning permission is required for the proposed extension, it is important that accurate scaled drawings are prepared for which it may be advisable to consult a qualified architect or surveyor.
- 1.0.4 This [Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\)](#) was adopted on 15th March 2021. It followed a period of public consultation between 31st July and 25th September 2020, the responses to which were taken into account in preparing this final version. As an adopted SPD which supplements policies in the [Local Plan](#), this document is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. This guidance replaces the previous Design Guide to House Extensions SPD adopted on 17th March 2003.

2.0 Planning Policy Context

- 2.0.1 Policy H9 (Housing Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation) of the adopted [Reading Borough Local Plan](#) is a criteria-based policy which controls the siting, design and impact of house extensions in the Borough.
- 2.0.2 The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on producing an acceptable householder application. This is achieved by giving relevant guidance and some examples of best practice. This guidance does not prescribe inflexible standards or standardised solutions to meet the policy objectives, but describes the design principles against which proposals will be judged.
- 2.0.3 Further Reading Borough Local Plan policies (listed below) also need to be considered when putting together an application for a house extension. The policies are designed to ensure quality, sustainable development in terms of impact on the proposed dwelling and the surrounding area. Applications risk being refused if they do not comply with policies, including this SPD.
- 2.0.4 House extensions will be assessed against, but not limited to, the following policies of the Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019):
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction

- CC3: Adaption to Climate Change
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
- EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodlands
- H9: House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation
- H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
- TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

2.0.5 Extension proposals affecting a heritage asset or its setting need to refer to the relevant Reading Borough Local Plan policies for guidance regarding specific design requirements. This includes proposals in a conservation area or affecting a listed or locally-listed building. Relevant policies are:

- EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas
- EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets
- EN6: New Development in a Historic Context

3.0 Permitted development

3.0.1 [Permitted development](#) rights allow householders to improve and extend their homes without the need to apply for planning permission where that would be out of proportion with the impact of works carried out ([Permitted Development Rights for Householders: Technical Guidance](#)), providing that the proposed development falls within certain guidelines and criteria. Permitted development rights can be found on the [Planning Portal website](#).

3.0.2 Please note that, in some cases, permitted development rights may have been removed. This could be the case for instance where an Article 4 Direction is applied to a building or area. This is a legal direction that removes some or all permitted development rights. A number of Article 4 Directions are in place in Reading, and more information can be found on the Council's [website](#). Permitted development rights may also have been restricted when planning permission was given for a property, and this will be set out on the decision notice. Please contact the Council if you are unsure.

3.0.3 For confirmation that a proposal forms permitted development, you can apply to the Council for a Lawful Development Certificate for a proposed use. More information can be found on the [Lawful Development Certificate part of the Planning Portal website](#). For single-storey rear extensions, extending beyond the rear wall of the original house by 4-8 metres (detached houses) or 3-6 metres (all other houses), a Prior Approval: Larger Home Extension application is required. More detail is also on the [Householder Prior Approval part of the Planning Portal website](#).

- 3.0.4 Please note that permitted development rights can change, and this document only reflects the latest position when it was adopted in 2021. It is always worth checking the Planning Portal website for the latest situation.

4.0 Climate change

- 4.0.1 On 26th February 2019, Reading Borough Council [declared a climate emergency](#) and resolved to take action to work towards a carbon neutral Reading by 2030. The design principles highlighted in Local Plan policy CC3: Adaption to Climate Change emphasise the importance of sustainable development.

- Wherever possible, new buildings shall be orientated to maximise the opportunities for both natural heating and ventilation and reducing exposure to wind and other elements.
- Proposals involving both new and existing buildings shall demonstrate how they have been designed to maximise resistance and resilience to climate change for example by including measures such as solar shading, thermal mass, heating and ventilation of the building and appropriately coloured materials in areas exposed to direct sunlight, green and brown roofs, green walls, etc.
- Use of trees and other planting, where appropriate as part of a landscape scheme, to provide shading of amenity areas, buildings and streets and to help to connect habitat, designed with native plants that are carefully selected, managed and adaptable to meet the predicted changed climatic conditions
- All development shall minimise the impact of surface water runoff from the development in the design of the drainage system, and where possible incorporate mitigation and resilience measures for any increases in river flooding levels as a result of climate change.

- 4.0.2 The [Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25](#) was launched in November 2020. The document highlights the importance of development that adapts to the climate change. This includes addressing issues such as flooding, insulating homes and businesses for energy efficiency. One of the aims to achieve a net zero carbon Reading by 2030 within the 2020-25 Climate Strategy is to reduce the loss of heat from buildings. The Sustainable Design and Construction SPD is intended to guide developers towards producing a sustainable proposal.

5.0 Preparing an application

- 5.0.1 To demonstrate that your proposal complies with criteria outlined in the context of planning policy try to:
- **Prepare a Planning Statement:** Whilst not an absolute requirement, a Planning Statement to accompany the application is useful in explaining the reason for the extension, the basis for the proposed design and choice of materials and why you consider that it will be acceptable in the context of the character and appearance of the existing house and general area and will accord with policies.

- **Check the Council's Validation Checklist:** The Council publishes a Validation Checklist which sets out the information needed for your application to be registered as valid. For householder planning applications, this is usually the correct form and certificates, fees and necessary plans (location plan, existing and proposed block plan and existing and proposed floor plans and elevations). However, depending on the case, the planning officer may ask for additional information to determine an application, such as tree surveys, materials details, site survey, daylight and sunlight assessment and vehicle parking. The [Validation Checklist](#) gives more detail on when these may be required.
- **Please consider your neighbours. Show on the block plan, and elevation drawings if necessary, where the neighbours' windows are and indicate which rooms they serve. Consider whether your extension will affect [daylight](#) to your neighbour's [habitable rooms](#). Talk to the neighbours about the scheme (before submitting the application) to iron out potential difficulties.**

5.0.2 Performing the above will contribute to the submission of a comprehensive application that can be determined by a case officer. Further guidance on creating a householder planning application can be found on the [Planning Portal](#) and on the [planning advice page of the Council's website](#).

5.0.3 A standard consultation period for a householder planning application is 21 days from when the application is valid. The consultation period allows neighbouring residents and other interested parties to comment on or raise concerns regarding a planning application. If a consultation response raises a concern that is in line with planning policy, the issue raised will be assessed on balance against the proposals.

6.0 Assessment criteria and considerations

6.0.1 All householder planning applications will be assessed against the following criteria when considering a house extension.

6.1 Impact on existing dwelling

6.1.1 Size and scale

Proposals that appear bulky and sizeable in relation to the existing dwelling will not be considered favourably. Consideration needs to be given to the size of the existing dwelling and what is considered subservient to the existing dwelling. Extensions should complement and not appear overbearing to the existing dwelling. Disproportionate proposals that are considered harmful to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling are unlikely to be supported.

Proposals that are submitted without consideration for size and scale can often appear overbearing to the existing dwelling. This can harm not only the character and appearance of the dwelling, but also the street scene. There is also a risk of loss of light, overshadowing, and the proposal being considered overbearing to neighbours. Where a side and rear extension is proposed, it needs to be subservient

to the existing dwelling. This can be achieved by setting back the side extension from the front of the dwelling.

A successful application will demonstrate the proposals are subservient to the existing dwelling and respect the original design and style.

6.1.2 Outdoor amenity

Applications for extensions will be assessed against the loss of on-site outdoor space. A useful guide is that useable [outdoor space](#) should be no less than the [Gross Internal Area \(GIA\)](#) of the dwelling which it serves. In many instances rear gardens in historic areas are already less than that of the internal floor space, and as such will be assessed on a case by case basis. Usable outdoor space is considered to consist of rear gardens and side access, and, where it is genuinely useable for amenity purposes, front gardens. Outdoor space does not include areas that are allocated for car parking spaces or [garages](#).

6.2 Impact on neighbouring properties

6.2.1 Boundaries

Where possible, all extensions should be kept as far away from side boundaries as possible. Maintaining a reasonable gap between dwellings allows for ease of access for front and rear aspects of the dwelling.

Please note that the entirety of the extension should be within the red line boundary shown on the site location plan. This includes eaves or other features above ground level. If these are to extend beyond the property boundary, the site location plan will need to reflect that, and any other landowners will need to be notified and Certificate B of the application form completed.

6.2.2 Overlooking, overshadowing and overbearing

Care should be given when designing an extension of any scale that there is not a loss of [daylight](#) to [habitable rooms](#) in neighbouring dwellings. It is highly likely that an application will be refused unless it demonstrates that neighbouring dwellings will not suffer from a loss of light. This can be demonstrated in proposals by illustrating the [45° rule of thumb](#) on proposed plans and an assessment of orientation in relation to direct sunlight to important habitable rooms.

The orientation of the proposal site is also a factor to consider with regards to overshadowing and loss of light. For example, a rear extension to a north facing elevation would likely have less of an overshadowing impact to neighbouring residents. Development to southern elevations on the other hand are likely to have an overshadowing impact. An overshadowing impact can be reduced by appropriately scaling, siting and spacing the proposal.

6.3 The natural environment

6.3.1 The Green Network

The natural environment can have a significant impact on all types of extension proposals. Consideration needs to be given to the situation of trees, existing hedges and habitats. The [Green Network](#) is a network of habitats, open spaces and existing or potential vegetation features, which could include such things as lines of trees or bushes within back gardens. Proposals should seek to enhance or maintain the quality of the Green Network. To find out if your dwelling falls within the Green Network, please consult the [Reading Borough Local Plan \(Adopted November 2019\) Proposals Map](#).

At the scale of householder planning applications development should not result in a loss of [biodiversity](#) within gardens. This applies to all gardens, inside or outside the Green Network. Proposals that include the planting of trees are generally encouraged. The planting of trees contributes positively towards improved air quality, particularly within an urban borough such as Reading. Other benefits include a reduction in flooding, shading and sheltering to reduce urban temperatures, providing a wildlife habitat and movement network and reducing noise. There are also aesthetic benefits that make our environment more enjoyable, as trees contribute to local character, make up a valued part of the historic environment, enhance privacy and add greenery and colour. These factors all help to contribute to better mental and physical health ([Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy 2020](#)).

6.3.2 Topography

Topography can also be a factor in some proposals. Otherwise modest proposals can suddenly become quite significant in terms of their harm on neighbouring dwellings with regard to loss of light and appearing overbearing. This applies to street scenes on a steep hill.

6.4 The street scene and the surrounding area

6.4.1 Fenestration

[Fenestration](#) concerns the arrangement of windows and doors in relation to the host dwelling and adjoining properties. In determining applications the Council looks to ensure that the proposals do not disrupt the pattern of building frontages. Proposals are refused if windows and doors are featured in the design that are inappropriate in terms of size, scale and/or placement. This can be particularly noticeable on semi-detached dwellings. This serves the purpose of preserving the character and appearance of the street scene and horizontal rhythm.

6.4.2 Materials and detailing

To complement the existing dwelling and street scene, matching materials and detailing is encouraged where appropriate, unless quality design is achieved through the use of other materials. For example, when extending an older

property, it may be appropriate to source older or reclaimed materials; this particularly applies to roof tiles and brick work.

It is possible to select materials that do not match, but still support or improve the overall character and appearance of the existing dwelling. Sometimes it is necessary to use materials and detailing that does not match the existing dwelling to avoid replication or continuation of poor previous design choices. These applications will be considered on their own merits, with the overall look and appearance of the proposal in mind.

Proposals within Conservation Areas will need to refer to the relevant Conservation Area Appraisal. Particular attention needs to be paid to any design elements that are considered of value to their historic environment setting. Proposals will need to take these design elements when proposing alterations or selecting materials. Proposals that are considered to harm the historic environment will not be supported. Reading Borough Local Plan policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment supports proposals that protect and where possible enhance their historic environment setting.

6.4.3 Existing development patterns

Development that enhances the street scene through high quality design will be considered favourably. High quality design should not be discounted purely on the basis that it does not fit in with a street scene. High quality design that enhances the street scene may still be acceptable where it provides a visual difference to the existing character and appearance of the surrounding area.

The context of the area concerned is important. If the area consists of good to high level design, it is important that any proposals respects this. For areas that are considered lacking in character, it is for proposals to improve upon this and enhance the area. Simply copying a poor to mediocre existing style is not considered good design, development should always contribute positively or enhance existing areas.

Development proposed within a conservation area will be expected to protect or enhance the character and appearance of the historic environment. Specific information on each conservation area can be found within Conservation Area Appraisals, including priorities for enhancement, and further guidance may be produced. In line with policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset, which will also include listed buildings and locally listed buildings and their settings, should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits.

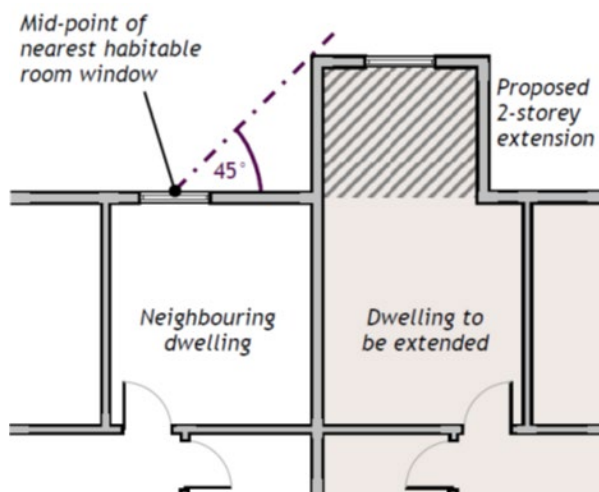
7.0 Specific extension type guidance

7.1 Rear extensions

7.1.1 When designing a rear extension, it is important to consider established patterns, and existing extensions to other developments in the street scene. Rear extension proposals would likely not be supported if they demonstrate any of the following:

- Harm to neighbouring dwellings in terms of overlooking. This can be avoided in most cases by not having windows on the side elevations of rear extensions.
- Harm to neighbouring dwellings in terms of loss of light. This particularly applies to two storey rear extensions. Two storey rear extensions should not be closer than a line taken at 45° (60° for a single storey rear extension) from the middle of any window of a [habitable room](#) in a neighbouring property.
- Designs that do not complement the existing dwelling. For example, a proposal for a flat roof extension, where a pitched roof extension would better serve the character and appearance of the dwelling.
- The rear extension extends more than 4m from the existing dwelling. This applies to both single storey and two storey rear extensions. However, the acceptability of a rear extension in terms of length and height will be derived from the circumstances of the application site. In some cases, an extension of more than 4m may be acceptable, but this needs to be justified.
- The resulting rear extension would reduce the back to back distance between dwellings to under 20m for two storey developments, 28m for 3 storey developments.

7.1.2 The considerations outlined in section 6 of this document also apply to all forms of rear extension.



45* rule of thumb

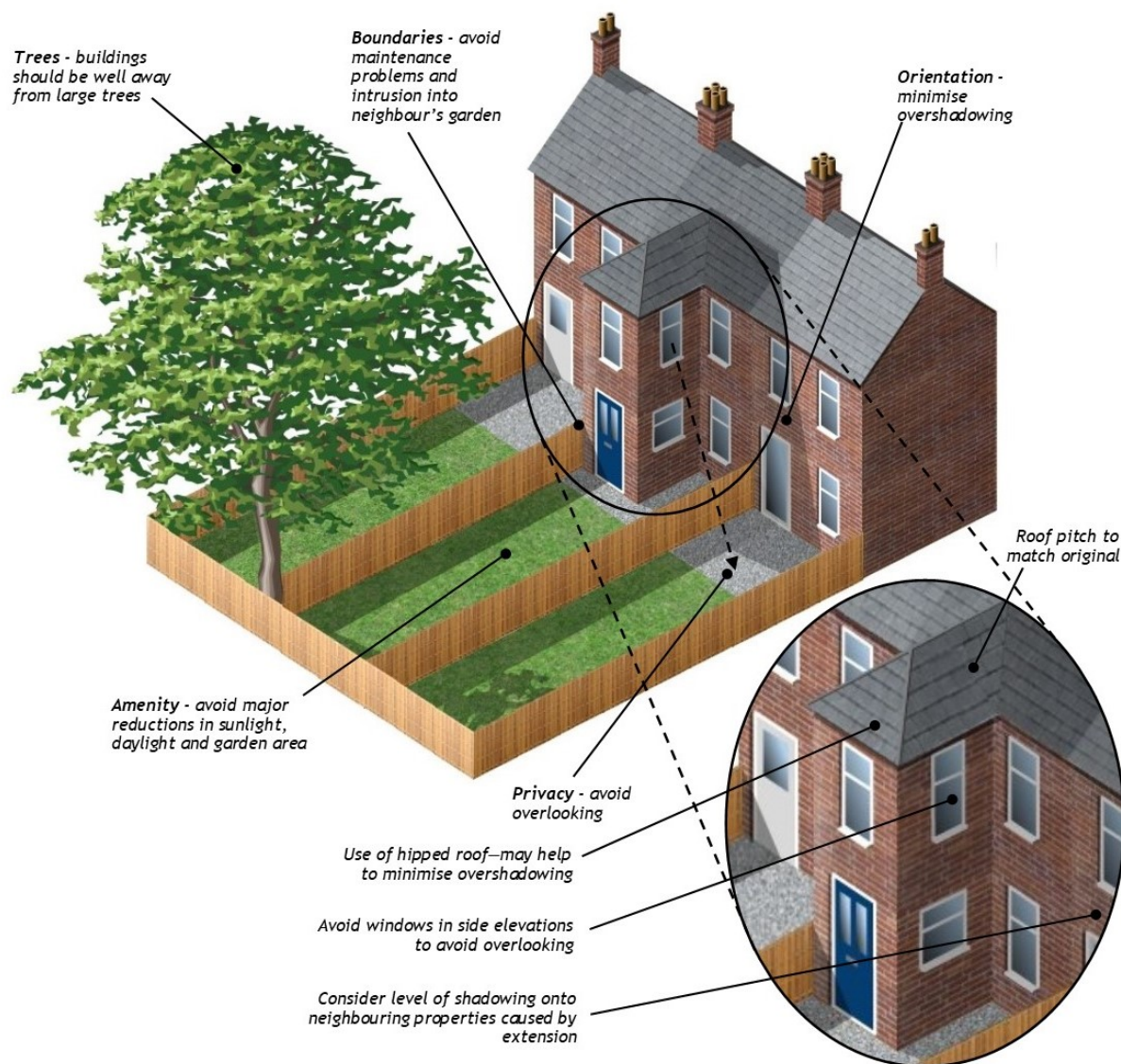
Photo: Single storey rear extension (planning application 170022), approved on 01/03/2017

- *Extension avoids reductions in sunlight, daylight to neighbouring properties.*
- *Simple design and proportions are in keeping with the existing dwelling.*



Photo: Two storey and single storey rear extension (planning application 170496), approved on 19/05/2017.

- *Hipped roof utilised to minimise shadowing.*
- *Appropriate separation of two storey element from the adjoining neighbour's first floor window, avoiding loss of light.*
- *No side facing windows on first floor of two storey element.*



7.2 Side extensions

7.2.1 Two storey side extensions should be designed to be smaller in scale than the main house. This can be achieved by setting the proposed front elevation of the extension further back from the front elevation of the original house and maintaining a gap between neighbouring buildings by bringing the upper floor away from the side boundary. These devices should result in the ridgeline of the roof of the extension being significantly lower than that on the original house and the overall effect is an extension in proportion with the original house, and generally with the neighbouring properties.



- 7.2.2** In streets with blocks of terraced houses, semi-detached houses and detached houses sited close together, the existing gaps between properties are often a crucial factor in determining the appearance and character of a street. The loss of these gaps due to two storey side extensions can result in a terrace being formed visually and the loss of views between houses. The effect of this could be harmful to the local character by intensifying development in already high-density areas. Proposals for side extensions that will result in the loss of a gap to the detriment of the local character will fail policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm and will not normally be granted planning permission.



- 7.2.3** To comply with the protection of privacy criteria, side windows on upper floor levels should be avoided. Where this is the only option, they should either be high level or glazed with frosted glass and have restricted opening to prevent overlooking. Windows and doorways at ground floor level should be carefully sited to ensure that overlooking of existing windows in the adjacent property will not occur.

Sensitively designed extensions can harmonise with the existing character.



Set down roof line and set back from front elevation and side boundaries avoids terracing effect.

- 7.2.4** On the end of terrace properties and pairs of semis the roof design should retain the symmetry of the original block or pair of houses if possible. However, in some cases, in order to avoid overshadowing neighbouring properties or creating too much mass a hipped roof rather than a gable may be accepted. In other cases, including single storey side extensions the roof design should complement the roof on the original house in terms of design and angle of pitch.
- 7.2.5** In all cases, if the side extension also projects into the rear of the property, the advice given earlier in this document for rear extensions will also apply.



Photos: Single storey side and rear extension (planning application 170282), approved on 31/03/2017.

- *Side extension is subservient to existing dwelling.*
- *Materials match the existing dwelling.*

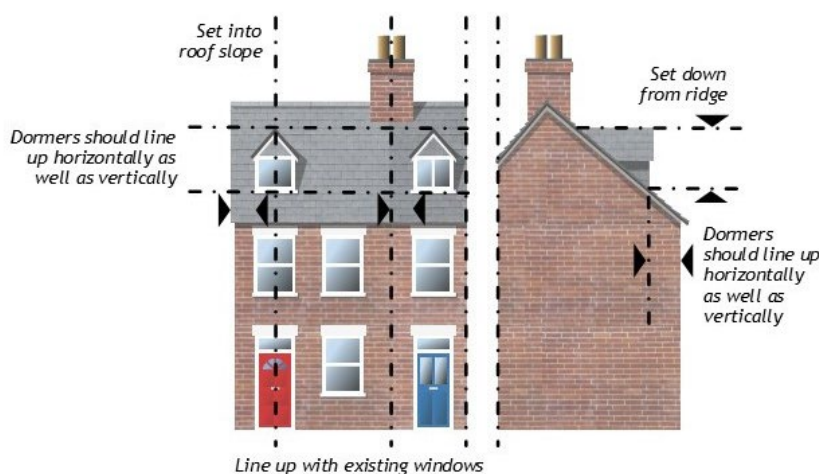


Photo: Two storey side extension (planning application 170188), approved on 15/05/2017.

- *Roof of extension set down from the ridge of existing dwelling.*
- *Side extension set back from the front of the existing dwelling.*
- *Materials match the existing dwelling.*

7.3 Dormer extensions

- 7.3.1** Dormer extensions generally need planning permission where they are on the front of a house. Rear dormers, subject to certain caveats which can be seen in more detail on the Planning Portal, are usually [permitted development](#) unless within a conservation area, on a listed building or in an area where an Article 4 direction applies.
- 7.3.2** Where permission is required, dormer extension proposals need to demonstrate compliance with policies CC7: Design and the Public Realm, CC8: Safeguarding Amenity and H9: House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation relating to the character of the original house and adjacent properties and the protection of privacy. Unfortunately, Reading has a few examples of box style dormers on the front of houses or dormers of excessive size which demonstrate how harmful this type of extension can be if not designed with these key criteria in mind.
- 7.3.3** Dormer windows should be set within the roof slope and be in proportion with the scale of the rest of the house in terms of overall size and window shape. Two appropriately designed small dormers may be better than one large dormer in achieving this. It is important that dormers and rooflights reflect the pattern of existing window openings by being positioned to line through vertically with the window openings below, whilst avoiding building to the edge of a neighbour's roof to avoid party wall issues.
- 7.3.4** In some cases; flat roof dormers may be more appropriate than pitched roof dormers, if done in a way that is appropriate in terms of size and scale. One example where flat roof dormers could be considered appropriate is on a Georgian style house, or a bungalow with a high pitched roof. The key consideration is whether or not the flat roof dormer is appropriate in terms of size, scale, and selection of materials in relation to the existing dwelling and are not considered 'box dormers'.
- 7.3.5** All dormer extension styles will be considered on a case by case basis in relation to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and surrounding area. The conversion of existing roof space within a dwelling to living accommodation where light is obtained solely by the insertion of velux type roof lights does not normally require planning consent.



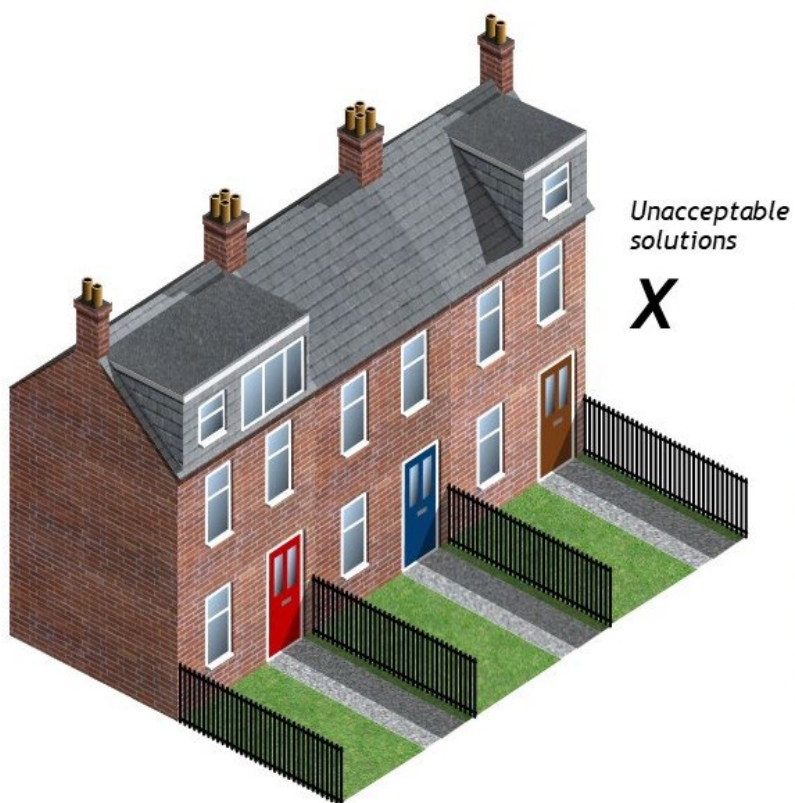
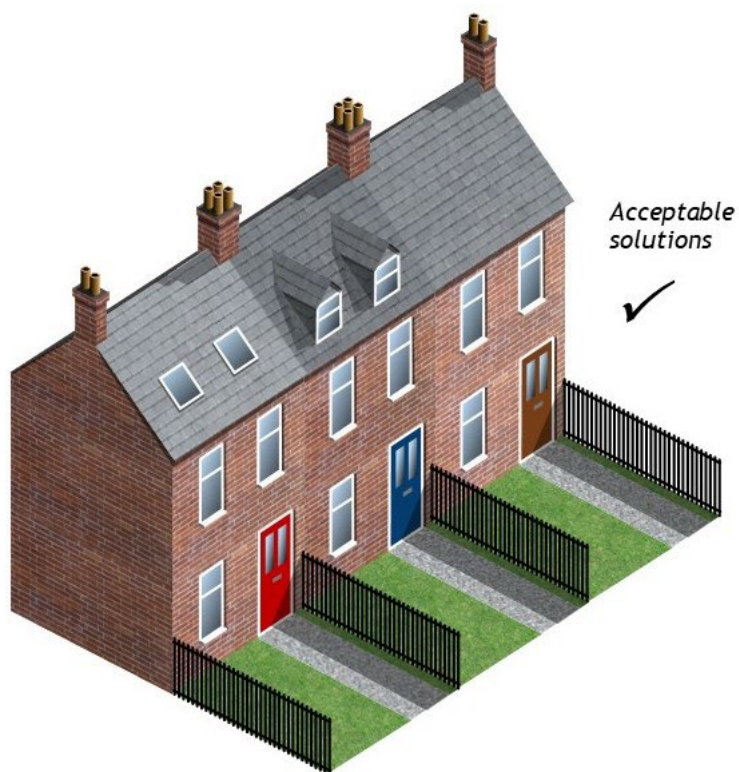




Photo: Example of a box dormer. A discouraged form of dormer extension due to the design being overbearing and harmful to outlook.

7.4 Front extensions and porches

7.4.1 The Council will not normally grant planning permission for front extensions that are excessive in size, height and depth relative to the dwelling on the site and neighbouring buildings. Where there is a prevailing building line within the street, front extensions should not extend beyond that line. Failure to demonstrate a balance of proportions in the case of semi-detached, or terraced property extensions that stretch across the whole of the frontage or compromise the symmetry of design will result in refusal.

7.4.2 Poorly designed front extensions can have a major and damaging impact on the appearance of not just the subject house but on neighbouring properties and the street generally.



Photo: Front porch (planning application 170159), approved on 10/03/2017.

- *Design does not detract from existing dwelling.*
- *Proposal does not encroach on a line taken 45° from the mid-point of the window to the nearest neighbouring [habitable room](#).*
- *Concerns of a break in the building line are eased by the presence of porch canopies to neighbouring properties.*

7.5 Upwards extensions

- 7.5.1 A new [permitted development](#) right was introduced in August 2020 to allow up to two additional storeys on two-storey houses and one additional storey on one-storey houses, applying to houses built between 1948 and 2018. There are a significant number of important caveats and conditions to this permitted development right, and these are set out in more detail on the Planning Portal website. A householder who wishes to make use of this right must apply for prior approval from the Council, and the Council must consider matters such as the amenity of neighbouring properties and the external appearance of the building when considering the application, as it would for a planning application.
- 7.5.2 In considering applications for prior approval for upwards extensions, policy H9 will be applied as for any other extension application. Upwards extensions are particularly likely to affect neighbouring properties in terms of overlooking or overshadowing, present an overbearing impact, or detract from the character of the house or street. It is not possible to set general guidelines on when an upwards extension may be appropriate as it will depend very much on the individual case, but it is recommended that further advice is sought via the pre-application route (see section 8.0).

7.6 Buildings in the garden

- 7.6.1 New buildings should complement the appearance of the main house by reflecting the age and design features, such as through matching materials, roof shape or window details. Proposals that detrimentally impact neighbouring properties in terms of character and appearance, loss of light, or amenity will be refused, as will proposals which unacceptably reduce the garden space of the dwelling.
- 7.6.2 In many cases these structures will fall within [permitted development](#), however, this advice is relevant to all such developments. For a building within the garden to be considered permitted development, the proposal must:
- Not project forward of the principal elevation.
 - Not have a ground to eaves height of more than 2.5m.
 - Not have a veranda, balcony, or raised platform.
 - Not cover more than 50% of the original garden.
- 7.6.3 Further guidance on permitted development rights for outbuildings can be found in the [Permitted Development Rights for Householders: Technical Guidance](#), relating to Class E development.

7.7 Ancillary accommodation

- 7.7.1 Ancillary accommodation in this case refers to provision of more self-contained accommodation such as a granny annexe. Ancillary accommodation that complies with the principles in this SPD and with other planning policies is largely acceptable, so long as it does not have the capability of operating as a separate dwelling that could be let or sold separately (Reading Borough Local Plan policy

H9). The Council will place controls on a planning permission for ancillary accommodation to ensure that it does not form a separate dwelling, either through planning conditions or legal agreements. Ancillary accommodation can be considered to have the capacity to operate as a separate dwelling where it:

- Is self-sufficient in terms of facilities, this includes a kitchen and a bathroom.
- Has its own front door, without internal links to the original dwelling.
- Has its own external facilities such as parking provision, access, [private outdoor space](#), or these facilities could be easily created.

7.8 Windows and doors

7.8.1 Windows and doors associated with extension proposals should reflect the character and appearance of the existing dwelling. It is important to consider how doors and windows affect the design of a proposal. Where possible, windows and doors should:

- Reflect the character and appearance of the existing dwelling.
- Use matching materials and designs throughout.

7.9 Fences and walls

7.9.1 The Council usually resists proposals that would close off views or change the character of a street unless positive improvement can be demonstrated. For example, a 2 metre high wall or close-boarded fence on a street with all other properties having low hedges or post and rail fences will fail Reading Borough Local Plan policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm, as it will look out of character. It could also cause an obstruction, preventing pedestrians and motorists from seeing each other as vehicles pull out of driveways. All proposals for fences and walls should have consideration for the following:

- Character and appearance of the surrounding area. Ensuring that a closed off effect is not created in an otherwise open plan street scene. This particularly applies to areas where the character is spacious and verdant.
- Public safety in terms of sight lines and access.

7.10 Hard surfaces in gardens

7.10.1 Laying a hard surface in the garden of a house does not usually need planning permission, as long as it is associated with the use as a house. In the case of front gardens, where more than 5 square metres are to be covered, the material used must be porous, or water running off the surface must be directed to a porous area elsewhere on the property, otherwise permission will be required. Porous materials can include gravel, permeable block paving, porous asphalt and porous concrete. Please note that demolition of all or part of a front wall in a conservation area to gain access to a parking area will need planning permission, as will a dropped kerb on a classified road.

7.10.2 In those unusual cases where permission is required, the design should avoid a detrimental effect on the character of the building and street. Any loss of

vegetation and existing features such as walls or railings should be minimised and materials used should complement the existing house. Car parking should not extend onto the footpath or highway, and the risk of surface water flooding should not be worsened. Even where permission is not required, these are still useful principles to follow.

8.0 Contacts and pre-application advice

- 8.0.1 If you have any queries concerning the contents of this document please contact the planning section for more advice on **0118 937 3787**. It is particularly important to seek guidance if your house is either listed or is within a conservation area.
- 8.0.2 Reading Borough Council also offers a [pre-application advice service](#). This service offers advice and help to make a sensible, realistic and achievable application. This service is encouraged if you are not confident that your application will be successful and would like detailed advice.
- 8.0.3 A copy of the Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019) and [Proposals Maps](#) can be found on the [Planning Policy page of the Council's website](#), or viewed at Reception at the Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2LU, or in Reading Borough Libraries.
- 8.0.4 **Enlarged or black and white versions of this document can also be provided.**

Building Control

- 8.0.5 A separate application for Building Regulations Approval will almost always be needed for a house extension whether or not planning permission is required and it is advisable therefore to discuss your proposals with [Building Control](#).

Building Control, Reading Borough Council

Call 0118 937 2449

[Berkshire Guide to Extending Your Home](#)

- 8.0.6 Furthermore, your neighbour may have civil law right or be able to invoke covenants, or the extension may fall within the scope of [Party Wall Act 1996](#). These are entirely separate matters from planning permission, and it is your responsibility to check.

9.0 Glossary

45° rule of thumb - A 45° angle taken from the window of a neighbouring property to assess the impact of two-storey proposals in regard to loss of light to a habitable room. Unacceptable proposals will cast a shadow that infringes the 45° angle. This rule is discussed in 6.2.2 and 7.1.1.

60° rule of thumb - A 60° angle taken from the window of a neighbouring property to assess the impact of single storey proposals in regard to loss of light to a habitable room. Unacceptable proposals will cast a shadow that infringes the 60° angle. This rule is discussed in 7.1.1.

Biodiversity - The diversity of plant and animal species

Daylight - The amount of natural light that enters a building to provide a satisfactory illumination of internal accommodation between sunrise and sunset.

Fenestration - The arrangement of windows and doors in relation to the host dwelling and adjoining properties.

Garages - It is widely recognised that garages are not solely used as vehicle parking provision. Many garages are now used for multiple purposes; such as recreational use, and additional storage to the host dwelling. For a garage to be recognised as a car parking space: it must first be at least 7m x 3.2m. In addition to this it must be evidenced that the garage is being used for vehicle storage.

Green Network - The interconnection of key areas for biodiversity importance in Reading. Permission will not be granted to proposals that detrimentally affect the Green Network through fragmentation.

Gross Internal Area (GIA) - The whole enclosed area of a building within the external walls taking each floor into account and excluding the thickness of the external walls. This is defined in more detail in the [RICS Code of Measuring Practice \(6th edition, 2015\)](#).

Habitable rooms - A room intended to be used for dwelling purposes. These are considered to be kitchens, living rooms, dining rooms and bedrooms. Bathrooms and utility rooms are excluded from this definition.

Local plan - The main document setting out planning policies for a district or borough.

Permitted development - A type of development that is specifically excluded from the need to apply for planning permission.

Private outdoor space - Land that can be used for outdoor activities and recreation. This does not include front gardens and areas used for parking.

Proposals map - A map on an Ordnance Survey base which shows the sites and locations to which policies apply.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) - A planning document which provides more detailed information than development plans, but do not have the same weight.

10.0 References and other useful guidance

[Relevant conservation area appraisals](#)

- [Alexandra Road Conservation Area Appraisal](#)
- [Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area Appraisal](#)
- [Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal](#)

- [Downshire Square Conservation Area Appraisal](#)
- [Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal](#)
- [Horncastle Conservation Area Appraisal](#)
- [Kendrick Conservation Area Appraisal](#)
- [Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal](#)
- [Redlands Conservation Area Appraisal](#)
- [Routh Lane Conservation Area Appraisal](#)
- [South Park Conservation Area Appraisal](#)
- [St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal](#)
- [St Peter's Conservation Area Appraisal](#)
- [Surley Row Conservation Area Appraisal](#)
- [The Mount Conservation Area Appraisal](#)

[Permitted Development Rights for Householders: Technical Guidance](#)

[Reading Borough Local Plan \(Adopted November 2019\)](#)

[Reading Borough Local Plan Proposals Map](#)

[Reading Borough Sustainable Design and Construction SPD](#)

[Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD](#)

[Further Reading Borough Planning Policies](#)

[Validation Checklist](#)

Planning Section
Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices, Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU

Tel: 0800 626540

[Planning Policy e-mail](#)

[Planning Policy website](#)