

# Extensions to Dwellings

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Note is one of a series of Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes (SPGs), amplifying the development plan policies and other issues in a clear and concise format with the aim of improving the design and quality of new development. The Notes are intended to offer broad guidance which will assist members of the public and officers in discussions prior to the submission of planning applications and assist officers in handling and members in determining planning applications.

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## 2 STATUS AND STAGES IN PREPARATION

- 2.1 The Council's SPG Notes are not part of the adopted plan. However, they have been the subject of both a formal Council resolution and public consultation. The Welsh Assembly Government (The Assembly) has confirmed that following public consultation and subsequent Local Planning Authority (LPAs) approval, SPG can be treated as a material planning consideration when LPAs, Planning Inspectors and the Assembly determine planning applications and appeals. This Note was approved by Full Council on 25th July 2001 for use in development control. A statement of the consultation undertaken, the representations received and the Council's response to these representations is available on request.
- 2.2 These notes have been prepared in accordance with guidance contained in Planning Guidance (Wales) Planning Policy; Unitary Development Plans (Wales); Technical Advice Notes.

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## 3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 It is understandable and legitimate for householders to want to improve and extend their properties. This may take the form of brick / stone built extensions or conservatories to provide additional living space or to provide garage space. Most extensions are reasonable and acceptable, and where planning permission is required it will usually be obtained. However, some extensions may have an adverse impact on the area by virtue of their size, scale, aspect, design, materials and locality. Whether or not planning permission is required this guidance note will help bring about quality development which will be of benefit to all.
- 3.2 The purpose of this SPG is to provide additional guidance in order to:
- illustrate the criteria and considerations which will be taken into account by the Council in assessing proposals for extensions to dwelling units;
  - provide advice on planning and designing domestic extensions in a way which will enhance the appearance and value of the dwelling;
  - maintain the character and amenity of the neighbourhood.
- 3.3 The primary aim of the Local Planning Authority (LPA) in this case Denbighshire County Council, is to:
- protect the public interest.
  - reconcile the needs of individuals with the broader community interest.
  - provide well built and sympathetically designed extensions or additions.
  - maintain the individual character and amenity of residential areas throughout the County.

## 4 Neighbours

- 4.1. To maintain good neighbour relations the LPA recommends that any householder intending to extend their property informs and discusses their intentions with their neighbours affected by the development. It is the responsibility of the applicant / householder / agent to ensure that any extension / solid wall / means of enclosure is constructed on land under their ownership, and that there is no encroachment of foundations or overhanging of guttering (Party Wall etc Act 1996 Ch. 40 - details of which are available at Planning Services Offices). This is both courteous and can avoid problems at a later date. On all planning applications consultations will be undertaken with neighbours likely to be affected by the proposal.

**5 Design**

5.1 The erection of an extension to a dwelling requires a sensitive and sympathetic approach, often requiring the service of a qualified architect. However, it is worth noting that good design need not necessarily be more expensive. Furthermore, good design will add value to a dwelling and any increase in costs due to materials etc can usually be more than recouped at a later date both in terms of resale value and lower maintenance costs.

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**6 PLANNING POLICY**

6.1 The Council's approach to the extension of dwelling houses is contained in Policy HSG 12 of the Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP). This policy is reproduced in full below:

*THE EXTENSION OR ALTERATION OF EXISTING DWELLINGS WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT:*

- i) THE SCALE AND FORM ARE SUBORDINATE TO THE ORIGINAL DWELLING;*
- ii) THE DESIGN AND MATERIALS ARE SYMPATHETIC TO THE CHARACTER, APPEARANCE AND BUILDING STYLES OF THE EXISTING DWELLING AND THE SURROUNDING AREA;*
- iii) THE PROPOSAL RESPECTS THE CHARACTER, APPEARANCE AND AMENITY STANDARDS OF THE DWELLING AND ITS IMMEDIATE LOCALITY;*
- iv) THE PROPOSAL DOES NOT REPRESENT AN OVER DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE.*

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**7 SENSITIVE AREAS**

7.1 The same general principles will apply across the County whether in urban or rural areas. In all cases an extension should be carefully designed and sympathetic in character and appearance to the original building and neighbourhood whether it is located in a rural landscape or high density 'urban' street. However, special considerations will need to be applied to dwellings in the following sensitive areas:

- Conservation Areas;
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB);
- Area of Outstanding Beauty (AOB);
- Local Landscape Areas;
- green barriers; and
- houses set within corner plots will also require careful consideration.

7.2 Special consideration will also need to be given to buildings listed as being of special architectural or historic interest. Any alterations or extensions which affect the character or appearance of a listed building will require listed building consent as well as planning permission. Prior discussion with the Councils Conservation Officers is advisable.

7.3 Separate guidance notes may be produced for particularly sensitive areas in the future.

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**8 GUIDANCE ON HOW TO EXTEND**

8.1 The three key considerations are set out below:

**a) Scale and Form of extension:**

8.2 The size, height and proportion of any proposed new extension should take into account the size, form and style of the original dwelling. It is the Local Planning Authority's view that in general any new extension should be subsidiary or subordinate in terms of overall floor areas, size, height and proportion to that of the original dwelling.

8.3 This will be particularly important in the case of small rural properties with limited floorspace where proposals may come forward for large extensions which could dwarf the original. It would be easy to impose a percentage figure for the increase in floorspace represented by an extension but this represents an 'artificial' method of assessing a proposal. However, it would be difficult to design an extension which came close to doubling (or more) the floorspace which appeared subsidiary to or in harmony with the original house. Key considerations are:

- whether the house is in the countryside or in a built up area;
- whether the extension is on a front, side or rear elevation, and
- whether or not it is publicly visible.

8.4 A design solution which is acceptable in one case may not be appropriate in another case and each case must therefore be looked at based on its individual characteristics.

8.5 The key objective is to ensure that the extension is in harmony with and complementary to the existing dwelling rather than an extension appearing as having been merely 'tacked - on'. There are a number of ways of looking at how an extension can relate to the original in terms of 'form'.

(i) **'Continuation'**

This is the simplest form where the extension continues the building line and roof of the dwelling. It is usually only successful where the extension is relatively small compared with the original dwelling. Careful design of windows and doors and choice of materials will be necessary to ensure that the extension respects the original house and that the 'join' between old and new is not untidy.

(ii) **'Reflection'**

It is possible to extend a dwelling to 'reflect' the original character of the house. This is usually done by adopting the same form as the original but either at a smaller scale or set back from the original in terms of height (roofline) and building line. This enables a better integration of old and new materials.

(iii) **'Separation'**

In some cases it may be preferable to separate the extension from the original by means of a link such as a porch, hallway or gallery feature. It is often used where the original house has a distinctive character or features which would be difficult to 'continue' or 'reflect'.

8.6 The Authority wishes to avoid over development of residential curtilages. This occurs when a substantial part of the residential amenity space is taken over by buildings including extensions. As a rule of thumb, no more than 75% of the site should be covered, leaving at least 40sqm of amenity space for a small dwelling (or 70 sqm for a larger dwelling), a 1m wide circulation strip around the building and the retention of sufficient on-site parking.

**b) Materials, siting and design.**

8.7 **Materials**

8.8 The use of materials for both external walls and the roof of an extension should blend with and be sympathetic to that used on the original dwelling in terms of type, texture, and colour. The pointing of stonework or brickwork should also reflect that used on the original dwelling. It may be useful to have regard to other dwellings in the locality if the dwelling has been altered from its original appearance. In the case of listed buildings or those in conservation areas expert advice should be sought as the choice of materials and mortar will affect the character and appearance of the dwelling.

8.9 **Siting and Design**

8.10 The character and style of extensions, are affected by the design of the roof, wall and window detailing and should ensure that the overall effect is in sympathy with, and does not adversely affect, the architectural balance of the existing dwelling or adversely affect the street scene. It may be that by setting back an extension from the front wall of an older house, it is possible to provide for a significantly improved scheme, aiding the character of the original and the extension to be highlighted. The main point is to enhance and not necessarily copy or imitate.

- 8.11 The relationship of windows to wall space should reflect the traditional balance. Details of ridges, eaves, gutters / downpipes should also be incorporated and illustrated appropriately. Pitched roofs are the most acceptable solution to extensions visible from a number of vantage points. However, in certain situations, for example an extension to the rear of a property, a flat roof may be acceptable.
- 8.12 Care must be taken in the positioning and design / treatment of windows overlooking adjoining properties and garden areas, so as not to unacceptably reduce neighbours privacy. Generally walls of extensions should not contain any windows at first floor level where that wall is close to the boundary, unless the window is of obscured glazing. However, obscure glass should only be used in non-habitable rooms such as halls, landings and bathrooms and not in main habitable rooms. There should also be no loss of privacy arising from ground floor windows on extensions or porches.
- 8.13 Windows on an extension should have regard to the windows on the existing house in terms of size, type, material, finish, and design. Some dwellings have windows with a vertical emphasis whilst others have a horizontal emphasis. In older properties timber casements or sash windows will be appropriate. In addition to the visual appearance of windows it is also necessary to have regards to energy efficiency and the possibility of providing a means of escape in the event of a fire.

**C) Site boundaries, landscaping - Garden Space and Parking Areas**

**8.14 General:**

- 8.15 Extensions or alterations may need to be enhanced by landscaping and site boundary treatment that is in keeping with the dwelling and its surroundings. Modern ground surface materials such as tarmac and concrete which may be acceptable for modern dwellings are often out of keeping with the character and setting of older dwellings. In such cases, cobbles, stone setts or blocks, or suitable gravel surfacing should be used where appropriate. Local natural materials, such as stone walling, can provide a more appropriate sense of enclosure, and soft landscaping of boundaries should consist of individual indigenous trees and shrubs in preference to alien and inappropriate species, such as fast growing conifers. Traditional hedgerows such as hawthorn may be appropriate in rural areas.
- 8.16 In addition to the provision of planting and landscaping measures undertaken as part of an extension it is also necessary to consider the effect of the extension on existing landscape features. The most obvious of these will be where an extension either necessitates the removal of a tree or is located too close to a tree so as to cause damage to the extension and subsequent removal of the tree.

**8.17 Garden Space**




- 8.18 Sufficient private garden space should be left after any extensions have been built to firstly, provide private play and amenity space and secondly, to ensure that enough space is kept between neighbouring properties so as to prevent a cramped, overcrowded feel to the area. The LPA would advise that wall to wall distances between properties which back or front onto each other should be 21 metres. Where a property fronts or backs onto the side of a dwelling, the separation distance should be 14m. These guidelines apply mainly to two storey extensions whereby principal windows at first floor level can cause overlooking on to dwellings at the rear or front - leading to a loss of amenity. In the case of single storey extensions amenity can be protected by appropriate boundary screening and ensuring the retention of a minimum garden depth of 6m. The aim in all cases is to protect amenity and privacy and avoid over-development.




**8.19 Parking Areas**

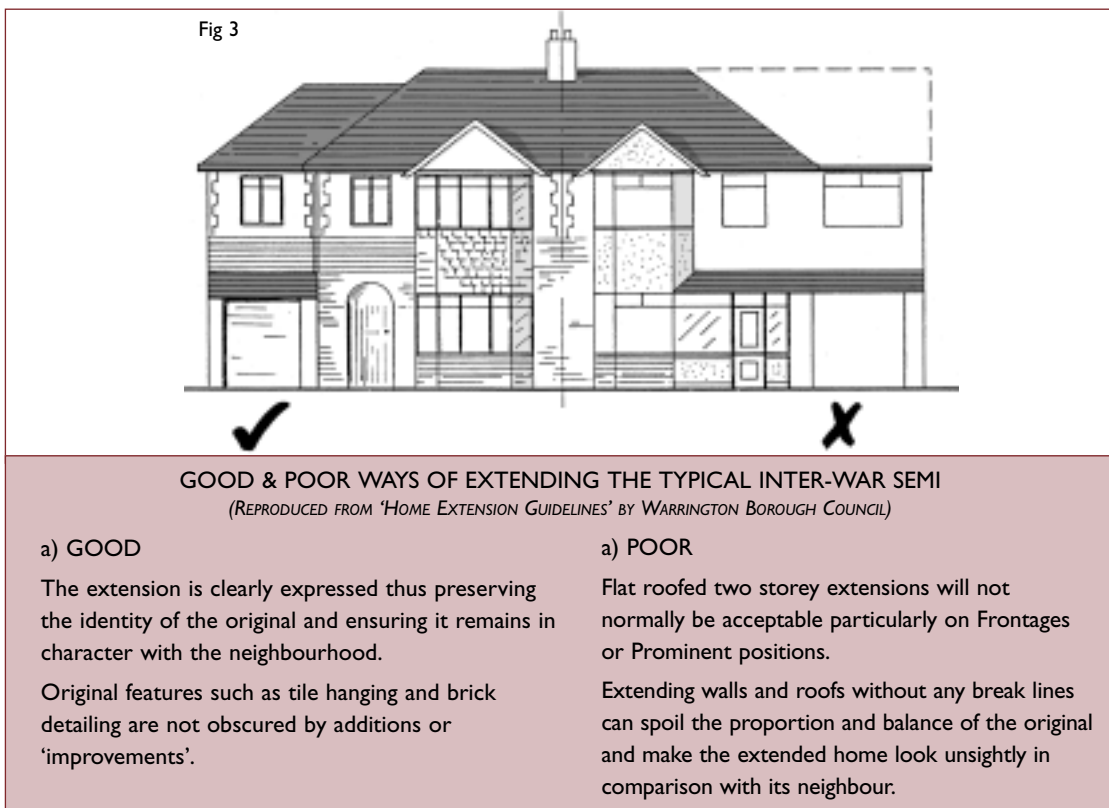
- 8.20 The requirement for proper parking and turning arrangements has also to be taken into account, especially with regard to a side extension which may reduce the amount of space available for off-street parking.

9 ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES:

9.1 Examples of good and poor ways of extending dwellings are illustrated in Figs 1, 2 & 3.

<p>Fig 1</p> <p><b>ORIGINAL</b></p>  <p><b>EXTENDED SHOULD BE</b></p>  <p><b>NOT THIS</b></p> 	<p><b>Features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural slate roof</li> <li>• Small windows of vertical shape, placed beneath eaves</li> <li>• Natural stone or limewashed</li> </ul> <p><b>Features of existing building retained:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roof ridge, eaves lines and roof pitch match original</li> <li>• Extension set back from original</li> <li>• Window style and proportions match original</li> <li>• Extension constructed of stone or painted render over blockwork</li> </ul> <p><b>Inappropriate extension / loss of features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacement of first floor casement windows with dormer</li> <li>• Raised height and bulk of extension out of scale and character with original</li> <li>• Large modern 'picture' windows and 'box' window out of scale with original casements</li> <li>• Concrete tiles appear 'heavy' compared to original slate roof</li> <li>• Pebbledashed walls out of character with original stone</li> <li>• Removal of front boundary wall, gate and tree</li> </ul>
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<p>Fig 2</p>  <p><b>GOOD</b></p>  <p><b>POOR</b></p> 	<p>Existing dwelling is an old house in near original condition.</p> <p><b><i>Slate roof with rendered and painted walls</i></b></p> <p>This extension is set back from the building line of the existing house and therefore reducing its impact. Its design, scale and appearance compliments that of the existing dwelling.</p> <p><b><i>Simple wooden side hung garage doors matches simple vertical style of front door</i></b></p> <p><b><i>The roof pitch has been lowered and the slate replaced with concrete tiles. The use of stipled finish on the house and bricks on the flat roof porch and extension is at odds with the original render. Modern 'picture' windows and metal 'up and over' garage doors create a suburban impression.</i></b></p>
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**10 SUGGESTIONS TO FOLLOW ON SPECIFIC FORMS OF EXTENSIONS**

**10.1 Front extensions.**

10.2 These extensions should not normally project excessively in front of the existing building. However, in certain situations front extensions may be acceptable where they repeat existing patterns of development or examples in the locality. A common front extension is the addition of a porch as illustrated in Figure 4. Substantial front extensions may be justifiable where the development replicates or follows the existing design of the building which is set back sufficiently from the road and would not have a harmful effect on neighbouring properties.

**10.3 Side extensions**

10.4 The main issue here is preventing a terracing effect i.e. prevent extensions at the side of detached and semi-detached houses from joining up with neighbouring houses to create a continuous terrace effect. (See Figure 5.) In general, flat roofed extensions which are poorly related to the dwelling should be avoided by having a pitched roof.

**10.5 Rear extensions**

10.6 One of the main issues involved with rear extensions is the need to protect the amenities of occupiers of dwellings immediately adjoining the proposed extension in terms of protecting privacy, maintaining sunlight and daylight and maintaining a reasonable outlook.

10.7 The effects of an extension on an adjoining property are set out in Fig 6. With this in mind the guidance to adhere to is what is commonly known as the 45 degree guide, as illustrated in Figure 7 (which can also be applied to front extensions). This is commonly used by LPAs. A 45 degree line drawn from the midpoint of a cill of a principal window on an adjacent or adjoining house. If an extension would 'extend' beyond that line then it would be likely to have a detrimental impact in terms of loss of light. The impact of the height of an extension can be assessed by drawing a line upwards at an angle of 25 degrees.

10.8 The following considerations will also be applied in terms of the projection depth and height of the extension.

**(i) Projection depth:**

10.9 Any projection beyond the rear wall of the existing dwelling which is on/close to a party/boundary wall should not be more than:-

- 3 metres in depth, for a terrace house
- 4 metres for a semi-detached/detached dwelling.

10.10 Any greater depth required, should be within an angle at 45 degrees from the 3 metre or 4 metre dimension on the boundary.

**(ii) Height:**

10.11 The Local Planning Authority would encourage the use of a pitched roof extension. For a single storey extension the height to ridge should not exceed 4 metres above existing ground level. If the original dwelling is single storey then the extension should not be higher.

10.12 Proposals which exceed the above mentioned criteria will be generally considered unacceptable unless it can be demonstrated that adequate amenity standards can be preserved through design detailing.

**10.13 Attic / Roof Extensions**

10.14 A popular way of achieving additional living space is to use the roofspace of a house. The suitability of this will to a large extent depend upon the size, height and construction of the roof and the layout of the house. If there is insufficient room on a landing to provide stairs, then it would be necessary to use an existing bedroom to provide stair access. In this situation a loft conversion may not have the desired effect of increasing the number of bedrooms.

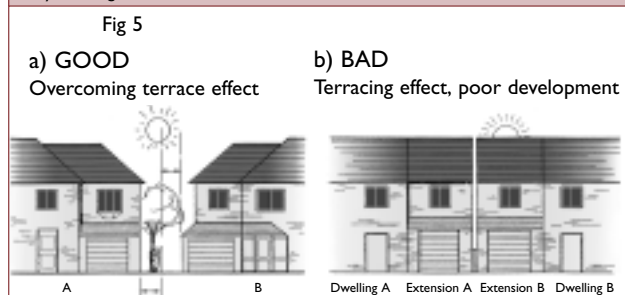
10.15 If there is sufficient height in the roofspace to allow for standing then light may be secured through rooflights, particularly the flush fitting conservation type. Where there is insufficient standing room, a loft conversion can only practicably be undertaken through alterations to the roof in the form of bulky dormers. Such roof extensions will rarely be acceptable as they affect the character, appearance, and amenity of an area to a greater degree than other forms of extensions. In some cases small gables may be acceptable provided that they are a feature in the locality.

**10.16 Granny Flat Extensions / Annexes**

10.17 An option for families who wish to look after elderly or sick relatives within the family home, yet retain a degree of independence is the construction of a granny flat or annex. This could take the form of an extension to the house or the conversion of a garage. These should form part of the same 'planning unit' ie share the same access, parking area and garden. Careful attention will be paid to the layout, design and physical relationship between the house and flat. The Council will wish to avoid the creation of two separate dwellings and will attach conditions to any planning permission to prevent this occurring.



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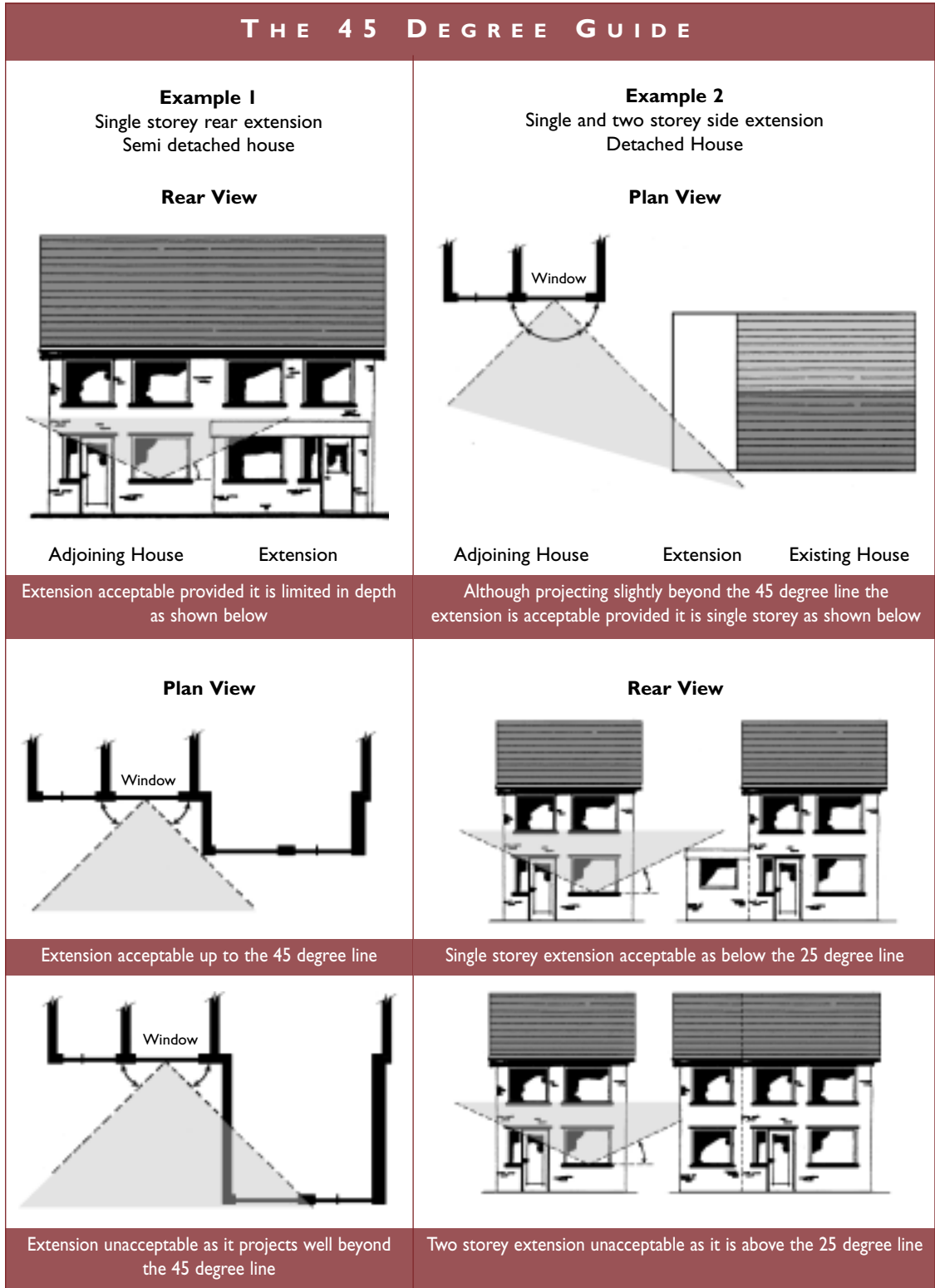
Based on drawings from 'Home Extension Guidelines' by Warrington Borough Council



These extensions would have an unacceptable impact upon the residential amenities of residents of neighbouring properties. There would be a loss of aspect and considerable overshadowing.

Based on drawings from 'Home Extension Guidelines' by Warrington Borough Council

Fig 7



**11 SPECIFIC ISSUES IN RELATION TO EXTENSIONS**

**11.1 Is planning permission required ?**

11.2 Some minor extensions and alterations to dwellings may not require planning permission and would be classed as ‘permitted development’. To find out whether planning permission is required, details of the proposals should be submitted with a form supplied by the Local Planning Authority. Properties located within an “Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty” or a defined “Conservation Area” have different guidelines as to what requires planning permission and the type of development likely to be approved.

11.3 If you wish to undertake extensions and alterations to a listed building, Listed Building Consent will be necessary. Further advice on developments within Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings can be obtained in the Council’s other SPGs.

11.4 Further guidance on the requirement of planning permission is contained in a pamphlet titled “Householders Guide to Planning Permission” a copy of which is available free of charge at the planning offices.

**11.5 The removal of permitted development rights.**

11.6 In granting planning permission for a new dwelling, “permitted development rights” may be removed by imposing a specific planning condition. This means that certain types of alterations, e.g. domestic garages, extensions, roof-lights, dormer windows, which would normally be “permitted development” require planning permission.

11.7 The removal of the “permitted development rights” is intended to protect the character of a building and to control development which, through a series of small changes, could adversely affect the character of the building and locality, particularly in sensitive areas. This also serves to safeguard the privacy and amenity of adjacent residential properties. Any applications for extensions which would normally be ‘permitted’ development need to be viewed with particular care.

**11.8 Building Regulations**

11.9 You are advised not to commence building works until clarification has been obtained in writing from the Local Planning Authority on the need for planning permission etc. or not. Whilst an extension might not require planning permission it is highly likely to require Building Regulations Consent. Checks should be made with both Planning and Building Control Officers in either the Planning Services North (Prestatyn) or South (Ruthin) offices (depending on the location of the property in the north or south of the County) to establish the position.

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**12 SUMMARY**

12.1 This guidance is an indication of what the Local Planning Authority consider to be necessary considerations for domestic extensions which will assist prior to, and in the course of submitting a planning application. The guidance notes are advisory only but should be generally applicable in most cases. They are not rigid or inflexible. The degree of flexibility it is possible to exercise, will depend on the particular circumstances that apply and the Local Planning Authority is happy to encourage discussions of suitable alternative approaches.



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