

# Householder Design Guide

## Advice on making changes to your property



**MILTON KEYNES**  
**COUNCIL**

## Introduction

The aim of this leaflet is to help residents who want to alter or extend their houses. The content contained within this leaflet is not adopted policy and constitutes informal advice only

The leaflet is intended to give you ideas and advice about how to design alterations and extensions to your house without having an adverse impact on the character and appearance of their home and residential area, and is concerned with the appearance of a house or of having too much impact on neighbouring properties.

If your alteration(s) or extension(s) require planning permission, following the advice in this leaflet will improve your chances of being granted planning permission.

## Before You Begin

If you wish to extend your home you may need:

- Planning Permission
- Building Regulations Approval.
- Listed Building Consent
- Conservation Area Consent

These are separate requirements, although Planning Permission, Listed Building Consent and Conservation Area Consent are usually applied for at the same time. If you do need any of these it is advisable to obtain them before Building Regulation Approval. Most extensions and significant alterations to a dwelling need Building Regulation Approval even if you don't require any other form of permission.

Some development can be carried out as 'Permitted Development' and will not need a formal planning application to be submitted. Advice about the permitted development rights relating to your property can be obtained from the Planning Enquiry staff who

will be able to advise you further. It is always advisable to check before you start work.

## Important Principles

Few sites are identical and all applications will be considered on their own merits, which have regard for the particular characteristics of each site. It is also recommended that you to discuss any proposals with your neighbours before submitting any plans. If you need Planning Permission the Council will notify your neighbours and neighbours may prefer to hear about your proposals from you before they hear about them from the Council.

Some of the issues that will be considered when assessing a planning application would be:

- Design quality
- Impact on the street scene and local area
- Loss of light
- Loss of privacy
- Visual intrusion
- Impact upon Conservation Area and/or Listed Building

It is important to remember that not all houses can be extended if they do not have enough space, or their position or design would mean that an extension would harm the nearby properties, street scene or local area.

If your property is within a Conservation Area and/or is a Listed Building you will need to provide a higher standard of design and materials.

## Extensions

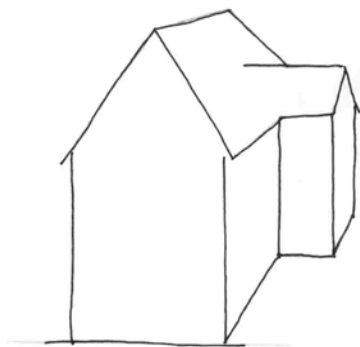
Below we've set out advice for the most common types of extensions (this includes conservatories) and other works to houses. If you follow this advice, it is

more likely that your application will be acceptable to the Council.

Apart from the advice set out below, you also need to ensure that you can provide enough off street car parking space to serve the extended property in accordance with the Council's Parking Standards and subsequent Addendum 2009.

## Front Extensions

Extensions at the front of a property are the most visible and therefore require the greatest care in considering their design, size and appearance. Proposals should always be sympathetic to the scale and character of the dwelling, and complimentary to the surroundings.



## Porches

The most common type of front extension is a porch. A porch of up to 3 square metres in floor area and up to 3 metres in height, positioned at least 2 metres from any boundary with a footpath or road, can normally be added to a house (not a flat or maisonette) without the need for planning permission. There are some parts of Milton Keynes where these rights have been removed so it is always advisable to check with the Planning Department Enquiry Team about your particular property.

Porches should be designed to respect and maintain the character and appearance of the dwelling and the area. Materials to match those of the dwelling, and the use of pitched tiled roofs are encouraged, whether or not planning permission is needed. A poorly designed porch may potentially reduce the value of your house.

## Other Front Extensions

Planning permission is usually required for any front extension (other than small porches), which projects nearer to a highway than the original dwelling house.

If the street or group of buildings has a well-defined building line, an extension which projects in front of the building line will be particularly noticeable especially at two-storey height. While some variety in the street scene may be allowed, front extensions will generally be restricted in their size, height and forward projection to ensure that they do not dominate the setting and outlook of neighbouring properties, or stand out in the street scene.

Where properties are set well back or are at different distances from the street, there may be greater scope for front extensions. All front extension should be designed to match the character and appearance of the dwelling and its surroundings. Pitched roofs and matching materials should normally be used and the size and scale of the front extension should be subservient to the main dwelling. Where properties are semi-detached or terraced, the effect of the proposed extension on the symmetry of the group will be a material planning consideration.

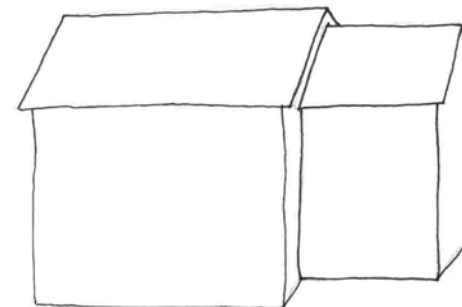
## Side Extensions

Side Extensions will be assessed in terms of:

- Their appearance in relation to the main dwelling.
- Their appearance in the street scene.
- Their effects upon the neighbouring property.

In general, side extensions should be designed to appear subservient to the main house. To achieve this, and to avoid creating a terracing effect, certain guidelines should be followed.

A two-storey extension should either leave a gap of 1 metre from the side boundary or be set back 2.5 metres from the front wall of the main house, and have a pitched roof with a ridge height lower than the main house. This may not be the case however for Listed Buildings.



Single storey side extensions need not be set back, but should have pitched roofs. If the house is one of a pair of similar semi-detached houses, maintaining the symmetry of the pair will be a factor.

The width of the side extension should be no more than two thirds of the width of the house. Doors and windows should match the pattern of the main house.

Windows in the side elevation, which overlook a neighbouring property or its garden, should be avoided. If side windows cannot be avoided they should be obscurely glazed and non-opening or have a cill height 1.7 metres above floor level. An alternative means of illumination could be roof lights.

If a neighbouring property has windows in its side elevation that provides the main source of light to a habitable room e.g. living room, kitchen or bedroom, a side extension that obscures that light is likely to be unacceptable.

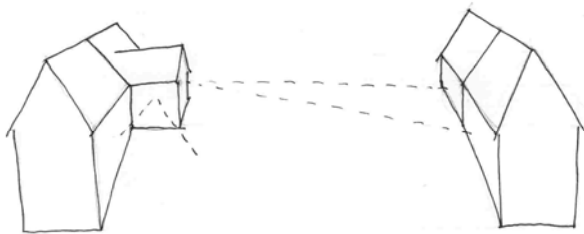
Where the side of your house is situated near to the rear garden of a neighbouring property a minimum separation distance of 14 metres should be maintained between the rear of the neighbour's house and any two storey side extension in order to protect the outlook and setting of the neighbouring dwelling.

## Rear Extensions

To protect the outlook, setting, daylight and amenity of adjacent properties, the following guidelines should be observed.

Single storey rear extensions will vary depending upon the type of property. On a terraced property, the depth of any single storey extension should not exceed 3 metres. On semi-detached properties, the depth of any single storey extension on or closely adjoining a common boundary should not exceed 3.6 metres. On detached properties, where there is a greater separation between houses, extensions exceeding 3.6 metres in depth will be considered on their merit.

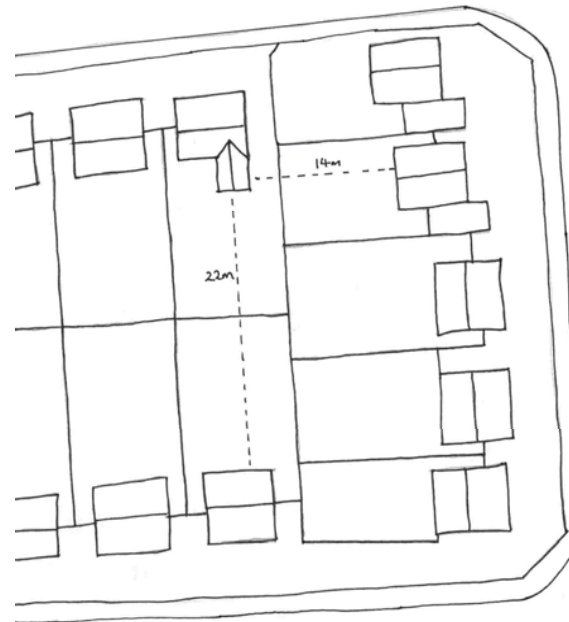
The presence of extensions on adjacent properties and the orientation of the dwellings will be material considerations. The height and design of the roof will have a material effect on your neighbour's light and outlook, and the extension should be designed to minimise the impact where possible.



A flat roof in exceptional circumstances may be permitted on a single storey rear extension where it is not visible from a footpath, road or other public viewpoint. Conservatories will be considered in the same way as extensions in respect of the impact on the neighbour.

Two storey rear extensions can seriously affect the outlook and light of adjoining properties. Generally a 2 storey extension which infringes a line drawn at 45 degrees from the nearest edge of any window of either neighbour's properties will be refused.

A two-storey extension will almost always be required to have a pitched roof except in very exceptional circumstances. A minimum back-to-back distance of 22 metres should be maintained between a two-storey extension and the nearest elevation of a neighbouring property. This is to make sure that the neighbouring property does not feel too overlooked from the extension.



## Dormer Windows, Roof Extensions and Rooflights

Dormer windows and roof lights need careful design and placement if they are not to dominate a building. In terms of their impact on the street scene, roof extensions and alterations frequently raise serious concerns and can often have significant adverse affect upon the character of an area.

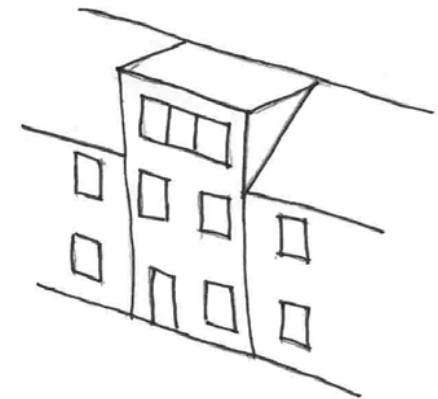
In both new and existing buildings they should be located in the lower part of the roof slope and located on the rear slope.

### Dormer Windows

Dormers on the front and side roof slopes are generally discouraged unless they are part of an established local character.

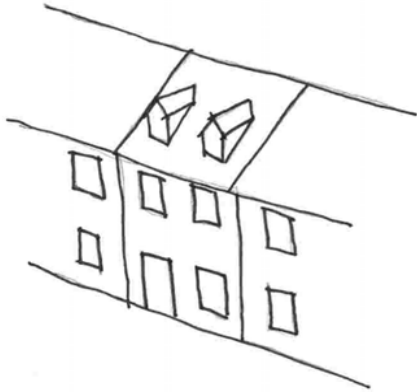
The provision of a dormer built off the wall plate and carrying the brickwork through to the front face and gable may in some cases provide an acceptable detail.

Flat roof box dormers are not normally acceptable, especially those that wrap around two roof slopes.



All dormer windows, which are viewed from public view, should include pitch roofs.

Dormer cheeks should be clad in materials to match the existing roof.



Dormers to thatched buildings are best incorporated into the slope, with details such as eyebrow dormers

The window design to dormers should reflect that of the existing house.

## Rooflights

Rooflights are an excellent alternative to creating habitable living space without creating new dormer windows and other intrusions within the roofspace.

In Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings, the impact of roof lights can be minimised by the use of 'conservation style'. These should sit flush in the roof slope and be situated in the least prominent position.

## Roof Extensions

Roof extensions should, generally have a pitched roof, be clad in matching materials or in the case of thatch; in clay tiles or natural slate.

New roof ridges should not exceed the height of the original. It is always better when a new ridgeline sits below that of the original.

Very rarely will flat roofs be considered acceptable although occasionally they can be provided to single storey additions hidden behind parapets. Generally roof pitches should match the existing building; a shallower pitch may be acceptable in some situations on single storey extensions.

Consideration should be given to the existing roof detail; this should be reflected in the new extension.

## Garages and Outbuildings

Garages do not count as car parking spaces and do not count toward the car parking provision for a property. Where a proposed garage is to be sited on a current parking space, the Council may seek additional parking spaces to be provided on site to accord with the adopted Parking Standards and subsequent Addendum.

The erection of garages and outbuildings (e.g. sheds and greenhouses) often do not require planning permission from the Council. Your first step should be to establish if this is the case by contacting the Planning Enquiry Officers (01908 252358) during office hours (09:00 - 17:15).

Garages, particularly double garages, can be bulky structures that take up much of the available space within a plot. Therefore, consideration needs to be given to their design and siting to ensure that they do not dominate the house and that they are not unsympathetic to the street scene.

Careful siting may be required to prevent garages having a harmful impact on neighbouring properties, issues such as the distance to the boundary; positioning and the site levels are key considerations. Thoughtful siting can also provide advantages, such as screening areas to improve privacy. Where a garage is to be attached to the house it is subject to

the same considerations as other forms of extensions.

The design of garages needs to compliment that of the main building. The roof shapes and pitches should mirror those of the main building. Flat roofs and mono-pitched roofs are rarely appropriate for garages, which are publicly visible and may have implications for future maintenance. The materials used should compliment and not detract from the main house and ideally should match.

As garages do not count as parking spaces there are no minimum dimensions that need to be met, however the forecourt to the garage would need to measure 6 metres in depth and have width at least 2.5 metres (although this figure may vary depending on access).

Where it is not possible to provide a forecourt, an alternative can be to erect an open structure such as a carport. The subsequent conversion of these to garages is tightly controlled in order to prevent negative impacts on appearance, highway safety and parking. Car ports need to be open on at least two sides and should have internal measurements of 6 metres in depth and 3 metres in width.

For many properties the garage can be converted to residential accommodation without the need for planning permission but there are limitations and you are advised to seek advice before commencing any works. Building regulation approval is always required.

For outbuildings and other detached structures like garden sheds and greenhouses that need planning permission the same considerations of siting and design apply. However, the nature and purpose of the structure will be taken into account when assessing issues such as materials.

## Walls, Fences and Hedges

### Walls and Fences

Planning Legislation (The General Permitted Development Order 2008) allows most householders to erect a wall or fence up to a maximum of 2 metres in height around their property or a maximum of 1 metre in height if it is adjacent to a highway (which includes any pavement or verge).

Planning permission is required for any fence or wall surrounding a Listed Building.

Fences or walls can be very prominent within the street scene and have a high visual impact. In Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings this is a key consideration. Different areas will have their own characteristics. For example, the type of design and materials that are acceptable within an urban location may not be appropriate for rural locations.

Some areas have been designed or set out to be open plan and many forms of enclosure will not be suitable.

Applications for fences or walls above 2 metres in height might be considered acceptable. But in such cases there is often a need to limit the visual impact of the fence or wall by the use of planting/landscaping. If security is an issue, security is normally improved by ensuring that views through the wall or fence are provided.

### Hedges

The planting of hedges to form boundaries does not require planning permission. Hedges can form visually attractive boundary markers and can also be used to provide privacy and screening. By planting native species they can become an asset to nature and wildlife.

## Amenity Land

Many property owners around the city find that there is land shown on their title deeds that is located outside their enclosed boundaries. In many cases this land is landscaped to provide amenity value for the locality and to enclose it within a private garden would be a change of use and planning permission would be required. Applications will be judged against Local Plan Policies (L2 and accompanying Appendix L2).

You are advised to consult with the Planning Department before undertaking any works to these areas.

## Conclusion

We all want to make the most of our property, but the changes we make can have an impact on our neighbours and the area in general. One of the purposes of Planning is to try and make sure that the impact isn't too great. If you follow the advice given in this leaflet, you should find that, if you need planning permission, the process will run more smoothly.

But if you still have questions about any of the issues raised in the leaflet please contact us.

## Contacts

Planning Enquiries

Tel: 01908 252358

e-mail: [planning.enquiries@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:planning.enquiries@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

Building Control Help Line

Tel: 01908 252721

e-mail: [building.control@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:building.control@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

You can get more planning advice and information (including the Council's Car Parking Standards) from the Planning pages on the Council's web site: [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk).