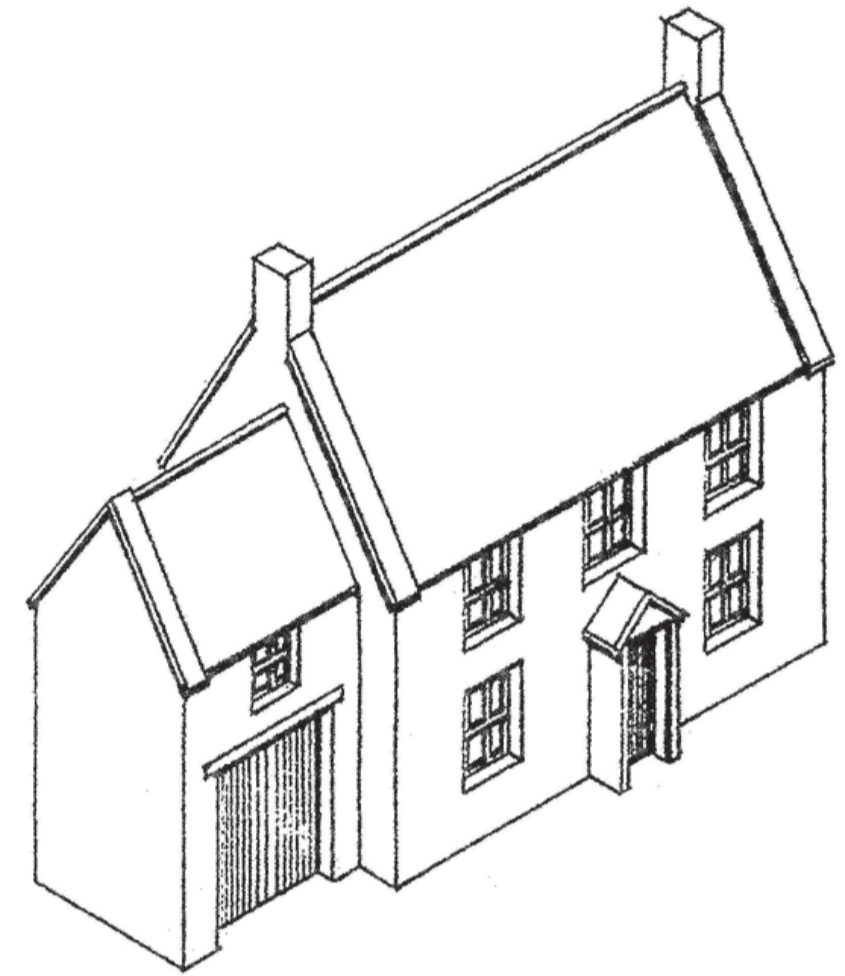


House Extension Design Guide



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Household Extension Design Guide

Introduction

Design is a subjective and often emotive topic. However, Mendip District Council feels that through the use of the ten design principles outlined in this guide, sympathetic house extensions can be achieved. There are three main issues to consider: an extension's effect upon the existing house; its effect upon the house's setting; and its effect upon the quality of life of neighbours.

Effect upon the existing house

An extension has to consider the style of the existing house to be successful. **Illustration A** shows an extension whose roof, building materials and size detract from the existing house. **Illustration B** also detracts from the existing building but is slightly improved by the use of appropriate materials. **Illustration C** shows how even a detached addition, because of its size and materials, can detract from the original building. **Illustrations G and H** show extensions which by paying respect to roof pitch, size, materials, window and door openings, form attractive additions. Flat roofs are often used for extensions because they are considered more economical in the long-term. This is not necessarily so. Flat roof constructions do not shed water as well as traditional pitched roofs and so have a shorter life span. Add this to the fact that they detract rather than add to the appearance of the house and their cheaper initial cost can be seen to be false economy.

Effect upon the house's setting

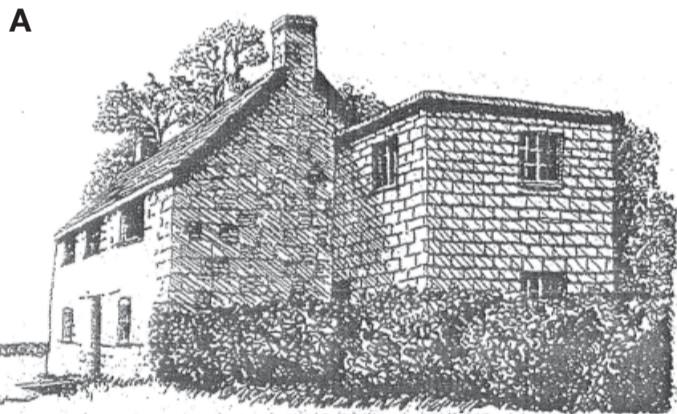
A house will form part of a streetscape, townscape or landscape. An extension must respect this setting. **Illustrations D and E** show houses that have lost their original character through the introduction of overly large dormer extensions. **Illustration F** shows how the removal of the two storey bay window, introduction of a large dormer and alterations of the window style have destroyed the original design of the semi detached house. **Illustrations I and J** show how by respecting the designs of the original houses and their neighbours, attractive extensions and dormers can be added.

Effect upon the quality of life of neighbours

The initial design of a group of houses will have incorporated sufficient privacy and sunlight for each house. An extension can upset this balance. **Illustration E** shows a rear extension, which both overlooks and overshadows its neighbour, destroying its privacy and sunlight. **Illustration J** shows that by keeping its extension away from its neighbour no overlooking or overshadowing problems are created. **Illustration I** shows that by keeping dormer extensions orientated in the same direction as existing windows, no additional privacy problems are created.

Full consideration of the house and its setting are the way to achieve sympathetic design. The ten design principles in this guide (overleaf) should be used as a checklist to achieve this.

The first two principles concern the extension's effect upon the neighbour's quality of life, overlooking, privacy and loss of light. Principles 3-7 concern the effect of the mass and shape of the extension upon the existing house. Principles 8-9 look at the detailing of the extension's features, such as doors and windows and its construction materials, to ensure that it is in keeping with the existing house. Finally, the creation of dependant person's annexe is considered. The diagrams help to illustrate the principles.



1. Overlooking and privacy

Principle: proposals which create serious overlooking will not be acceptable.

Reason: neighbours are entitled to a reasonable degree of privacy. Balconies, roof gardens, first floor patios and sun lounges can, in certain circumstances, adversely affect privacy.

2. Loss of light

Context: all building extensions will cast a shadow, which depending on orientation and size, may have an impact on a neighbour's daylight or sunlight.

Principle: neighbouring properties should not suffer significant loss of light from the construction of extensions.

Reason: reduced levels of daylight and sunlight result in a poorer living environment and adversely affect the enjoyment of adjoining properties.

Note: particular attention will be given to the loss of light to principal habitable rooms in neighbouring properties.

3. Bulk and size

Context: normally, extensions to buildings are subsidiary to the main structure being smaller and less significant than the original building.

Principle: extensions should be subordinate to the existing building in terms of their size and scale.

Reason: Over-dominant extensions destroy the architectural integrity of existing buildings, they devalue townscape, reduce environmental quality and create a bland and/or over-wide façade out of character with those of adjacent buildings.

Advice: the apparent size of an extension can be limited by setting it back from the front elevation and scaling down features such as windows and doors.

4. Roof pitch

Context: roofs are perhaps the most important ingredient in achieving the successful integration of a building extension.

Principle: where the original building has a pitched roof then all extensions should normally have a pitched roof to match.

Reasons: (i) to ensure visual continuity;
(ii) to minimise the adverse environmental impact of extensions;
(iii) to maintain environmental quality.

Note: pitched roofs are a traditional feature developed to cope with our climate. Flat roofs have a shorter life span than pitched roofs and, unless masked by a parapet, can have an unfinished appearance.

5. Rear extensions

Context: two storey rear extensions are more likely to cause a reduction of amenity and loss of light to neighbouring property than any other type of extension.

Principle: two storey rear extensions that have a materially adverse impact on the outlook and amenity of adjacent dwellings will not be acceptable.

Reason: two storey rear extensions may give rise to a cramped form of development, cause daylight problems and diminish outlook from neighbouring properties. Depending on orientation, two storey rear extensions can also considerably reduce light to existing rooms of the building to be extended. In all cases architectural integrity, environmental quality and neighbouring properties should not be disadvantaged.

6. Side extensions

Principle: side extensions should generally be set back from the main elevation of the original house and roofs should be lower than the existing ridge height.

Reason: to form a satisfactory design break and to distinguish between the original building and new work.

Note: the requirement for a set back will depend on prominence, siting, the nature of surrounding buildings and the choice of materials.

7. Dormer windows

Principle: dormer windows should be set back from the gable, flank or party wall boundary.

Reason: over-dominant extensions are environmentally obtrusive.

Principle: dormer windows to side elevations will be resisted.

Reason: roof additions to the side destroy the symmetry of buildings and can give rise to problems of overlooking of adjoining properties. For these reasons, they will be resisted.

Principle: dormer windows will not be permitted where any part of the extension will be above the height of the ridge of the main roof.

Reason: extensions should be visually subordinate to the principal elevations. This is not the case if they project above the ridge of the main roof.

Note: accommodation in roof spaces is traditionally subordinate to the main body of the home. Large, bulky and horizontally proportioned roof extensions destroy this arrangement, detracting from the original form, and architectural composition of the building, reducing the visual amenity of the immediate area.

Note: rear roof slopes can accept larger roof additions than other slopes. However, they should not interfere with the privacy of back gardens.

8. Elevation details

Principle: windows, window surrounds, doors, eaves, lintels and cills should be designed to match those of the main building in its original form or should be scaled down versions consistent with the subordinate nature of an extension.

Reason: to ensure architectural integration, visual harmony and the highest standard of townscape. Extensions which ignore the architectural details of the parent building can appear out of keeping and unattractive.

Advice: cambered or gauged brick arches in ready made sets, purpose made joinery, decorative ridge tiles and cast iron guttering are all available to help retain a building's character.

Note: reveals to all new windows and door openings should match the original openings of the existing building.

9. Materials

Principle: the proposed materials of an extension should normally match as closely as possible those of the existing dwelling.

Reason: materials are an important aspect of any building and, if used incorrectly, can lead to obtrusive extensions that detract from the character of a building or the street scene in general.

10. Dependent's persons accommodation

Context: the Local Planning Authority has no objection in principle to the erection or formation of dependant persons annexes and accepts that they fulfil a recognised need.

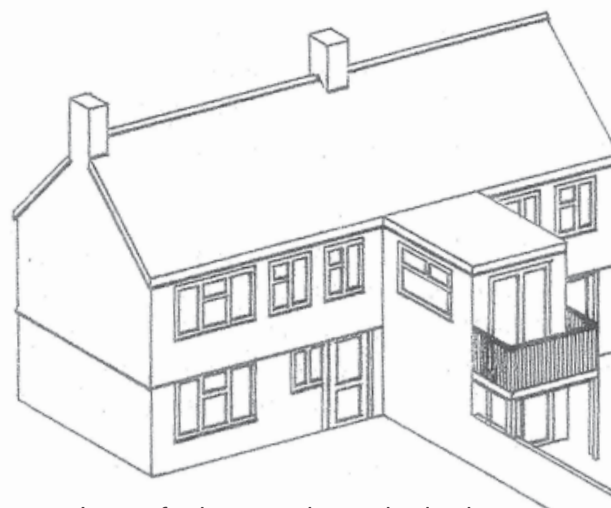
Principle: the proposed accommodation should be ancillary to the existing dwelling in terms of scale and facilities and should not be capable of becoming a separate unit of accommodation. The accommodation should be capable of being integrated back into the existing house when no longer required for its original purpose.

Principle: the conversion of buildings detached from the main residence will not normally be acceptable for example, garages being used to provide ancillary accommodation, except where they are of historic or architectural importance.

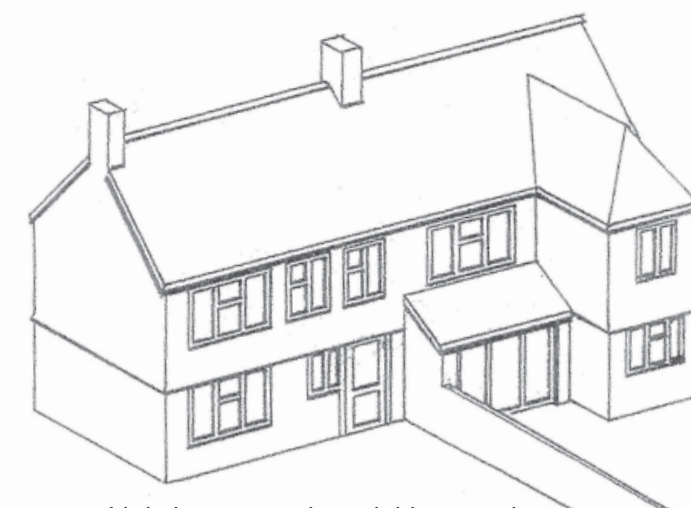
Principle: any proposal should not include either separate vehicular access or amenity/garden area and should not have a separate door to the front of the property.

Reason: dependant relative annexes will not be required indefinitely and will remain long after the personal circumstances which created the need apply.

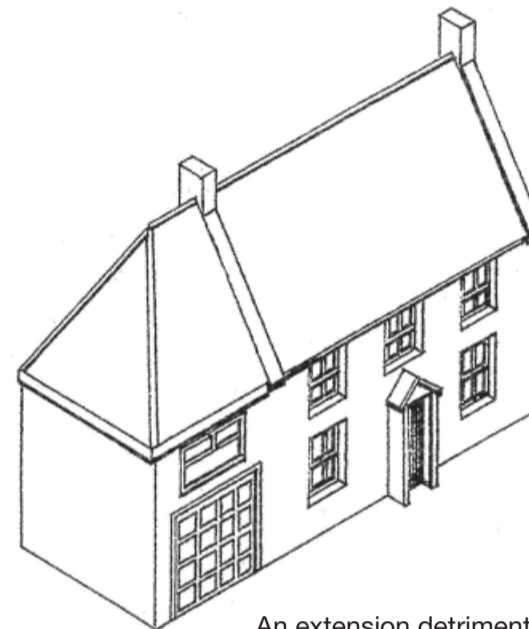
Note: dependant relative's annexes should be seen as an extension to the house and will therefore need to comply with other criteria in this guide.



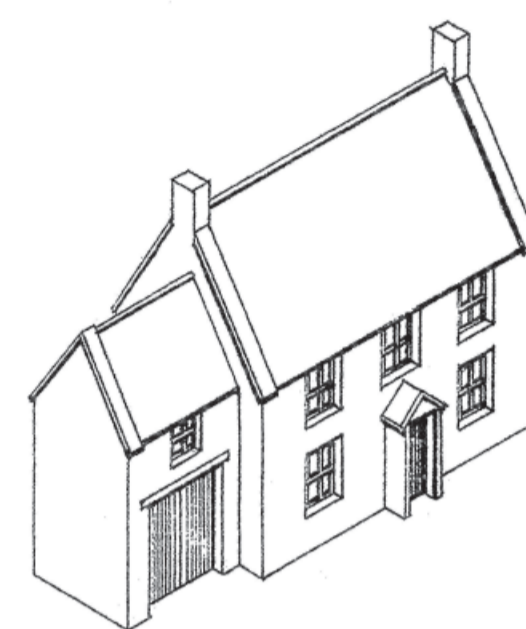
Loss of privacy and overshadowing of the neighbour and an unattractive bulky appearance.



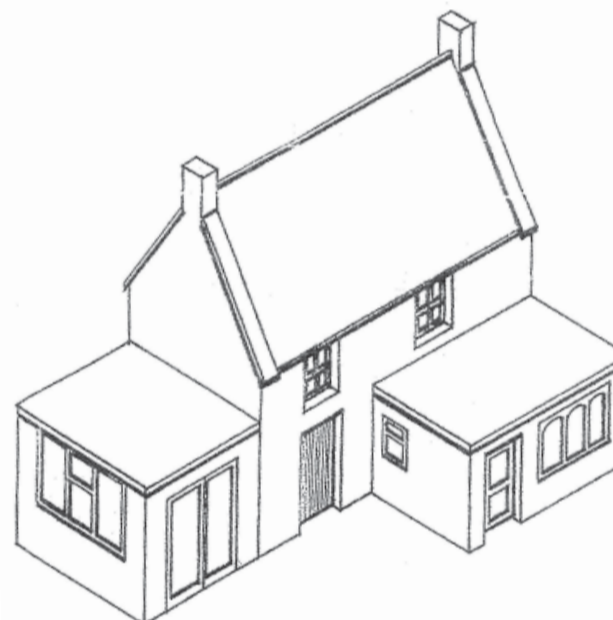
Little impact on the neighbour and less obvious through careful detailing.



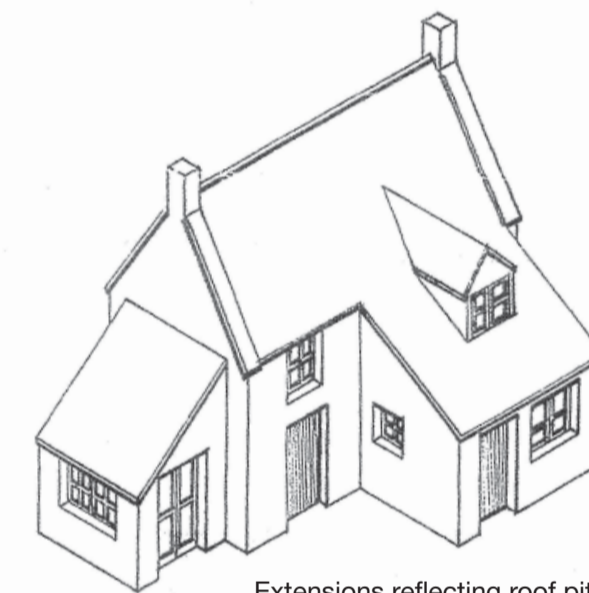
An extension detrimental to the character of the property by its size and unsympathetic detailing.



An extension in keeping with and subservient to the existing property.



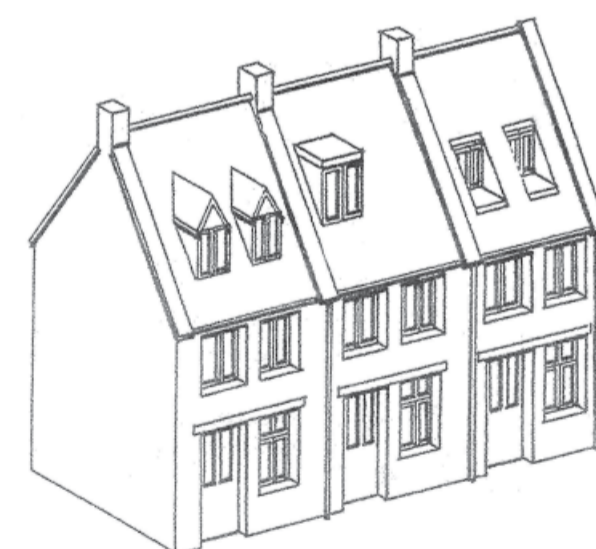
Obvious extensions not in keeping with the existing building.



Extensions reflecting roof pitch and detailing appear harmonious with the existing building.



Overly large and poorly positioned dormers dominate the houses.



Dormers respecting style, scale and which consider location are attractive additions.



Extension detracts from the existing house as there has been no consideration of existing features.



Appreciation of features and construction materials creates a sympathetic extension.