

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

REAR EXTENSIONS TO SINGLE STOREY TERRACED AND SEMI DETACHED HOUSES

1 INTRODUCTION

1. When householders require additional space, building an extension onto their existing home is seen by many as preferable to moving to a new larger property. This may be in response to escalating house prices and the desire to remain in a certain locality for personal reasons. In other cases people choose to move to a property which may not be of sufficient size but is in their preferred location. In such cases their choice of property is based on the premise that they will be allowed to extend it to meet their requirements.
2. In the last few years the Council has received an increasing number of applications for extensions, many of them large, to be built at the rear of older single storey semi-detached and terraced houses. The applications have particularly concerned the pre-war former workers cottages, typically found in Newtongrange, Rosewell, Easthouses and also Bonnyrigg. The proposals usually comprise accommodation at ground floor level and often also at first floor level in the roof space.
3. While the majority of applications are for modest extensions, a minority involves substantial increases in floor space. It is also noticeable that the size of extension appears to have been steadily increasing. Two issues are raised by the large size of some of the extensions.
4. The first is the scale of development proposed in relation to the existing house. Of particular concern is the impact of large bulky extensions on the character of existing single storey traditional properties, which are relatively modest in scale. Whilst the extensions are to the rear, some constitute a disproportionate addition, out of scale with the existing house. The result is that the existing house becomes swamped by the extension, with its original character lost at the rear.
5. A related concern is the danger of progressively reducing the sizes of gardens while increasing the footprint of the building. Without care there is potential for the relatively open character of the rear areas to these properties to be lost through over development.
6. The second issue is the effect of large extensions on neighbours. The effect of the extensions on sunlight and daylight will depend on such factors as orientation and the position of windows on neighbouring properties. It may not be significant in some instances. However, depending on the depth, width and roof height and design, the extensions can appear as a very dominant feature from neighbouring properties. This is particularly a problem where extensions are built close to the boundary with the immediately adjoining house. The extension can have an overbearing impact with a detrimental impact on the amenity of the occupier of the neighbouring property, significantly affecting their enjoyment of their rear garden.
7. The principal concerns for the Planning Authority is that extensions do not look out of place and spoil the appearance of the house or surrounding area and that they do not have an adverse effect on the amenity of neighbouring property. The Council has formulated detailed policy for house extensions which is contained in the Local Plan. The policy sets out a series of general requirements for extensions, as well as several specific policies for dormers and front porches. This guideline explains how the Council wishes the policy to be put into practice particularly for rear extensions to single storey traditional terraced and semi detached properties. However it can also be applied to modern developments where circumstances are similar (i.e. single storey semi-detached and terraced houses).
8. The purpose of this guide is also to assist applicants and their agents. By explaining the Council's policy for this type of extension it will hopefully avoid problems at an early stage, saving valuable time during the processing of the planning application. It should be noted however that compliance with the guidelines does not automatically guarantee approval of planning permission.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

9. While increasing the accommodation of a house, extensions can also add to their architectural interest. It is important that they do not detract from the appearance of the property or result in a material loss to the amenity of neighbouring houses. Extensions that reflect the style of the original are most likely to be successful. Novel architectural solutions, however, can also be acceptable.

Scale and proportion

10. Normally the size of an extension should be clearly subservient to the original property. Notwithstanding that the extension is to the rear it is important that its size does not remove all trace of the original property. It should also relate to the proportions and massing of the original building and not be too imposing on adjoining property. These objectives can be met, while still providing for a substantial extension, by observing the following criteria:
- the width of the extension to the rear of dwellinghouses shall not exceed the depth of the original house and in general should be at least 2m less than the width of the original house: extensions shall not exceed 8 metres in width.

Roofs

11. Normally roof pitches of extensions should match those of the existing roof. The roof of the extension (unless a single storey flat roof extension) should be either hipped or pitched with a gable end. It will not be acceptable to have sections of flat roof incorporated into the design of the roof as a means of increasing accommodation within the roof space. Additionally,
- Single storey flat roof extensions to the rear of dwellinghouses shall not exceed 3m in depth (beyond this size the disparity between the appearance of a flat roofed extension and the original house with its pitched roof will become more noticeable);
 - Extensions up to 4 metres in depth may have either a gable pitched roof or a hipped roof;
 - Extensions between 4 and 5 metres in depth shall, (to reduce the adverse visual effect of large extensions on the neighbouring property) in general have a hipped roof with its ridge preferably below the ridge of the original house; and
 - The ridge of the extension shall not in any circumstances exceed the height of the ridge of the main roof.

Architectural details

12. Architectural detailing, scale and proportion should be similar to the existing.

Amenity: Effect on neighbours

13. *Privacy.* Extensions must not result in a material loss of privacy for neighbouring property as a consequence of overlooking areas of adjoining gardens or house windows previously not directly overlooked from an upper floor or not previously subject to a direct line of sight from a ground floor window. As regards overlooking from the extension's ground floor windows this issue may be resolvable by the erection of a suitably sized wall or fence. Any upper floor windows must observe a distance of 25 metres from the vertical face of a building containing windows visible from the extension. This distance may be reduced to that of the distance of any adjoining buildings, if these already overlook the window in question.
14. *Visual impact.* To keep the visual impact of an extension from the neighbouring property to an acceptable level, and subject to meeting the other criteria within these guidelines, any extension may not extend beyond 5.0 metres down a shared boundary from the rear of the house.

15. *Daylight.* An extension must not by reason of its height, length or proximity to the boundary have a material impact on the daylight received by the window of a habitable room in a neighbour's house. As a general guide, an extension meeting the '45 degree rule' will normally be assumed not to have a material impact on daylight received by the affected window. For applicants and agents unfamiliar with this test further details can be obtained from the Council.
16. *Sunlight.* An extension should not have a significant impact on the sunlight falling on a neighbour's garden. Relevant issues in the assessment of this issue will be the extent to which the erection of buildings over the neighbouring garden has already reduced its capacity to enjoy sunlight.

Amenity: garden ground

17. An adequate garden area must remain after the house has been extended. The traditional single storey terraced and semi-detached properties in Midlothian often have small front gardens and relatively large private rear garden areas. The latter are normally accessed by private lanes. The rear private open space provides land not only for gardens but it also often accommodates garages and parking areas as well as sheds and greenhouses. Extensions should not result in all or a substantial part of the usable rear garden being removed. The original rear areas of many of these houses were long garden areas, in excess of 16 metres. In these and similar properties no more than a third of the length of the rear areas should be extended over. Where applicants wish to build over a greater proportion of the rear area it will be necessary for them to demonstrate that an adequate garden is being retained.

Larger extensions

18. In some limited circumstances extensions over 5 metres in depth may be possible. Their acceptability will be subject to the design and scale of the extension not detracting from the character of the original house and the extension not affecting the amenity of neighbouring property to a significant extent, and satisfying the following criteria. Extensions over 5 metres in depth will be set in one metre from the plot boundary and they shall:
 - be set a minimum distance of 1 metre from the shared boundary with neighbouring property to either side, for each and every increase in depth of a metre, or a part of a metre;
 - have their ridge a minimum of 0.5m below the ridge of the original house; and
 - the area of the extension shall not exceed the maximum area permissible in terms of the criteria set out in 10 and 14.
19. The following specific advice relates to proposals for rear extensions to the properties such as on the north side of Tenth Street, Newtongrange where there is a significant change in levels from the front of the properties to the rear, resulting in very bulky extensions to the rear.
 - Extensions to the rear of properties shall not extend across more than 2/3 of the width of the rear elevation of the original dwellinghouse or 7 metres whichever is the lesser;
 - Any extension shall not exceed 5 metres in depth;
 - Extensions up to 4 metres in depth may have either a gable pitched roof or hipped roof;
 - Extensions between 4 and 5 metres in depth shall have a hipped roof with its ridge a minimum of 0.5m below the ridge of the original house;
 - Two storey extensions to the rear of these properties shall not extend across more than half of the width of the rear elevation of the original dwellinghouse or 5 metres whichever is the lesser and shall not exceed 4 metres in depth and have a hipped roof with its ridge a minimum of 1.0 metre below the ridge of the original house.

Speaking to the neighbours

20. You will be required to formally notify your neighbours when you submit your planning application. Although it is not a legal requirement, speaking to your neighbours about your proposals well in advance of this formal stage will be beneficial to you in submitting any planning application. Often people are concerned when there are building works close to their home. If they have been well informed and understand your intentions they may be less likely to object to the extension you wish to build. Uncertainty and misunderstandings can lead to objections. These can increase the time it will take to process your application. This is because additional procedures are triggered which require the Council to take full account of any third party representations.

Further Information

21. While these guidelines apply to the whole of Midlothian it should be noted that in **conservation areas** additional requirements are likely to be in force. Similarly, the controls relating to **listed buildings** may result in dormer extensions not being possible. If you are unsure as to whether your building is in a conservation area or is a listed building please contact the Planning Information Officer (telephone number 0131 271 3302).