



## Domestic Garages and Outbuildings in Urban and Rural Areas

These guidelines are intended for people who want to build either attached or free-standing garages and outbuildings within the curtilage of their dwelling and require planning permission from the Council. The advice and design principles in this Guidance Note seek to ensure that new buildings are sympathetic to the existing dwelling, its neighbouring properties and the surrounding area.



In instances where planning permission from the Council is not actually required, it is hoped that the guidelines will highlight sound principles that can be incorporated into the design of free-standing garages and outbuildings. In several parishes, Village (or Parish) Design Statements (VDSs and PDSs) have been produced and adopted for development control purposes. These typically deal with local and vernacular design styles and should be referred to as important additional guidance.



### 1. Do I need to make a planning application?

**1.1** In the majority of cases, as a householder you are allowed to build new free-standing garages and outbuildings within the curtilage of your dwelling (subject to detailed criteria) without the need for planning permission from the Council. This is because of “permitted development” rights under town and country planning legislation.

**1.2** Where direct physical attachment of a garage or outbuilding to your dwelling is proposed, then your proposal will be regarded as an extension to your dwelling in planning terms. If this is the case, you should read this Guidance Note in conjunction with the Council’s Supplementary Guidance Note on “Domestic Extensions in Urban and Rural Areas”.

**1.3** Restrictions on what you are able to do within the curtilage of your dwelling will also apply if your dwelling is a Listed Building, is in a Conservation Area or another sensitive location such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Flats and maisonettes do not have any permitted development rights and you will automatically need to make a planning application.

**1.4** Occasionally, permitted development rights are withdrawn when a dwelling is first created e.g. conversion of a Kent barn or oast or the

erection of a new farm dwelling. A check with the Strategic Planning Unit will clarify the situation. If your dwelling is a converted building then the erection of new outbuildings could be unacceptable as a matter of principle because of the likely damaging impact on the plan/built form and character of the building in the landscape or the street scene. The space around this type of building helps define its “setting” and is an important contributor to its character.

**1.5** Care is required in balancing the reasonable need for outbuildings against the impact that they will have on matters of “setting” and ensuring that any design is sensitive to and appropriate for the context of the converted building. Further guidance on all aspects of development involving this type of dwelling is contained within the Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance Note, “The Re-use of Agricultural Buildings”.

**1.6** You are advised to obtain written advice from the Council’s Strategic Planning Unit at the earliest opportunity in the process to find out whether you need to make a planning application (and any related applications for listed building consent or demolition in a Conservation Area) for your proposals. On-line advice is also available via the planning home page on the Council’s web-site ([www.ashford.gov.uk](http://www.ashford.gov.uk)) and also via the Government’s “Planning Portal” ([www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk)). Both sites offer comprehensive guidance on how the planning system works.

**1.7** Finally, it is also important to remember that you may need separate approval for new garages and outbuildings under the Building Regulations. You are welcome to discuss your scheme with the Council’s Building Control Surveyors (Tel: 01233 – 330282) or take alternative professional advice.

## **2. Which factors will the Council take into account?**

**2.1** The design advice and guidance in this document will be a material consideration when the Council decides your application.

**2.2** The planning policy background to the promotion of good design in the urban and rural environment is set out in Government guidance (Planning Policy Guidance Notes and their replacements known as Planning Policy Statements) and also the Development Plan/Local Development Framework. Adopted planning policies in such documents will play a key role in helping determine your application.

**2.3** You may therefore also wish to read this Guidance Note in conjunction with the Ashford Borough Council Local Plan 2000, which contains environmental, design and other policies aimed to improve design quality and at the same time protect and enhance the Borough’s urban and rural environments. The Kent County Council Structure Plan 1996 and the Kent and Medway Structure Plan (Deposit Draft) 2003 should also be referred to for advice on development and design.

**2.4** All of the documents identified above can be viewed at the Council’s offices. The Local Plan and details of adopted VDSs and PDSs can be viewed on the planning page of the Council’s web-site ([www.ashford.gov.uk](http://www.ashford.gov.uk)).

### 3. Cumulative impact principles in the urban and rural environments

3.1 Wherever your dwelling is located, if it already has attached garaging, free-standing garaging or other outbuildings, then further buildings of this nature may be difficult to accommodate satisfactorily on the plot without detriment to the visual qualities of the street scene, the overall character of the surrounding urban or village area or the visual qualities of the rural landscape. For these reasons the cumulative impact of garaging and outbuilding development will always be an important issue for the Council to consider if the Borough's environmental quality is to be satisfactorily maintained.

3.2 There are two guiding principles of spatial organisation that assist in any analysis of the cumulative impact of garages and outbuildings.

#### Countryside

3.3 Dwellings tend to be either isolated farm dwellings surrounded by agricultural buildings or part of small sporadic groupings along roads and lanes connecting villages. Dwellings commonly have curtilage outbuildings servicing the occupants' incidental and ancillary use storage needs. These outbuildings are normally visually subservient in terms of size, scale and bulk to the dwelling served. For this reason, the nature of outbuilding development appropriate to serve a large manor house will be very different to that appropriate to serve a small cottage.

3.4 Providing a subservient and proportional relationship between dwelling and ancillary outbuilding is maintained, then the landscape will normally be able to accommodate outbuilding development without detriment.

3.5 Planning policy seeks broadly to restrict development in the countryside as a matter of principle and, related specifically to existing dwellings, seeks to allow reasonable levels of householder development providing that it does not give rise to visually harmful impacts.

3.6 Accordingly, new garages and outbuildings in the countryside will normally be able to be accommodated as a matter of principle providing that the visual impact of the resultant additional building work at the plot is one that:-

- expresses a coherent design form appropriate to the context of existing built development;
- is visually subservient in terms of size, scale and bulk to the dwelling that it will serve;
- does not result in a poorly proportioned or intrusive form of building in the landscape;
- does not undermine the dominance of the landscape through an unacceptable cumulative level of householder related development at the site.

#### Ashford, Tenterden and the Borough's villages

3.7 In contrast to the countryside, the situation here is reversed. Buildings are designed and located so as actively to contain space. Street scenes, squares, alleys, village greens and other open areas all represent



ABOVE: Countryside near Egerton



BELOW: (1) Queen's Street, Ashford (2) EastCross, Tenterden

character derived primarily from the enclosure of space by much tighter groupings of buildings than are found in the countryside.

3.8 Therefore, within these settlements, garages and outbuildings to dwellings will normally be able to be accommodated as a matter of principle providing that the impact of additional building work at the plot is one that:-

- expresses a coherent design form appropriate to the context of existing built development;
- is visually subservient in terms of size, scale and bulk to the dwelling that it will serve;
- does not result in a poorly proportioned or visually intrusive form of building within a street scene or over a wider area;
- does not result in over development of the site through unacceptable cumulative levels of householder related development to the detriment of the character and environmental quality of the surrounding area.



ABOVE: The Street, Smarddon

#### 4. Impact of garages and outbuildings in existing street scenes and in the context of the character of the surrounding area

4.1 Following on from cumulative impact principles, are matters of more detailed design. Garages, sheds and greenhouses, must be sensitively designed, taking into account the reasonable residential amenity of people living nearby. This can include reasonable expectations for daylight, sunlight and privacy. Reference should be made to the advice contained in the Supplementary Planning Guidance on “Domestic Extensions in Urban and Rural Areas”. Much of the advice (such as on outlook and privacy etc.) is equally applicable to garages and outbuildings.

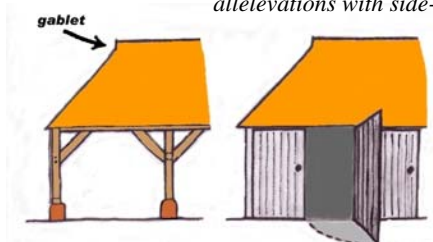
4.2 In an urban context, or in any location when a dwelling lies directly adjacent to another, care must be taken to avoid the situation where a garage or outbuilding would detrimentally impact upon the adjacent dwelling or most private area of its garden (overshadowing, loss of sunlight/daylight, loss of outlook and privacy).

4.3 In rural areas the siting and design of all buildings needs careful thought. The proposed use of the building will often determine its general position. Generally, in looking for a suitable location for outbuildings, these should be close to the existing dwelling to limit the overall impact of building work within the landscape. It is normally preferable to take advantage of natural or previously planted features, which can provide protection and screening. This will enable the new building to be closely related to either existing buildings, groups of trees, substantial hedge banks, or a protective hillside, minimising

BELOW: Left-hand side of plot more exposed inlandscape. Detached garage is better sited to the right-hand side closer to natural surrounding screening

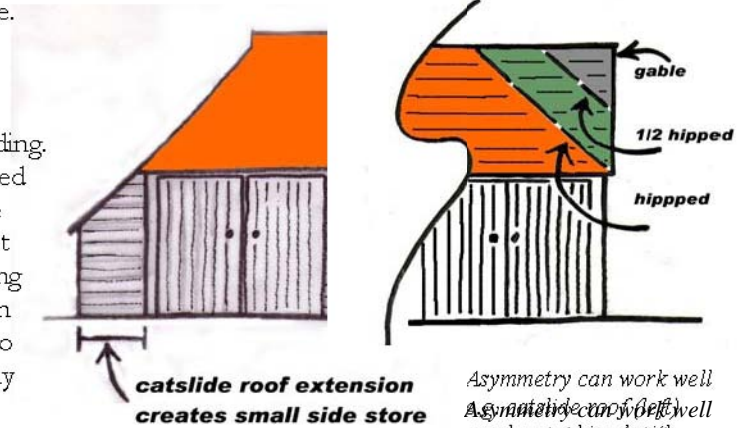


BELOW: Traditional timber framed open-fronted store (left) c  
BELOW: Traditional timber framed open-fronted store (left) canform basis for garage. Same building (right) enclosed on allelevations with side-hung doors



the visual impact of the new building on the landscape.

4.4 As with any other extension, garages and other outbuildings should be sympathetically related to the main building, whether they are adjoined or free-standing. This means they should be proportionate, well designed and in keeping with the character and materials of the dwelling. Pitched or lean-to roofs are preferable to flat roofs as they are more likely to compliment the existing dwelling and locality. Sweeping catslide roofs are often found in the Borough and can be usefully employed to provide small log stores, hide oil or gas tanks or simply to produce a more rustic and “ground-hugging” form of rural outbuilding.



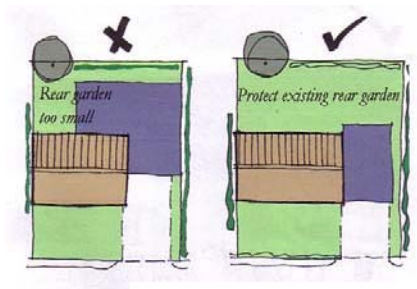
Asymmetry can work well  
 Asymmetrical roof (left) well  
 e.g. barn style roof (left)  
 half hipped (right) with  
 half hipped (right) -  
 ended roof (right)

4.5 Wherever possible garages should be set back behind the front building line to avoid unnecessary predominance in the street scene if that is the prevailing pattern of development in the locality. However, in instances such as the residential conversion of groups of traditional rural buildings, the position of outbuildings closer to the street than the dwellings they serve can be an integral feature of a sensitive and successful design.

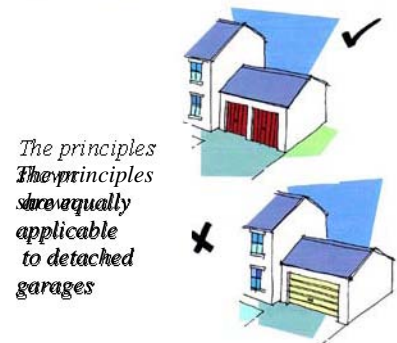
4.6 Garages at the side of dwellings are usually better set back from the building line of the dwelling. This helps them appear subservient to the main dwelling and avoids them being visually overly dominant. Garages and outbuildings that are located forward of any clear and visually obvious “building line” will not normally be acceptable if they disrupt a strong and established building line. Any buildings that have to be in the front garden as a necessity will have to be fully justified and designed so that they do not adversely affect the character of the street scene or the existing dwelling. In rural areas, or for isolated plots, the building line will be less of an issue, although proposals should still not be overly prominent or intrusive.

ABOVE: Example of a free-standing garage set back in a subordinate position and reflecting some of the design features of its related house

4.7 The retention of minimum garden areas for basic amenity facilities such as clothes drying, play space on family plots and general amenity is an important consideration when proposing garages and extensions. Over-development of the plot needs to be avoided. The exact amount of garden space that should be retained will depend upon the overall character of the area of which the dwelling forms part.



4.8 In general, materials for garages and outbuildings should be in keeping with the locality and should relate to the existing dwelling. As near a match as possible in terms of colour, size and texture should be made. Traditional materials such as clay tiles, slates and stock bricks are generally regarded as essential in the settings of converted or Listed Buildings and in sensitive areas such as Conservation Areas, Areas of



The principles  
 The principles  
 are equally  
 applicable  
 to detached  
 garages

Outstanding Natural Beauty, and Special Landscape Areas, to maintain their character and quality. Any adopted VDS or PDSs should be taken into account.

**4.9** The design of the outbuilding or garage doors will influence the overall appearance of the building and should relate to the character of the original dwelling. Timber rather than metal doors are preferred for traditional dwellings, particularly in rural areas. The proportions of a garage may relate better if two single garage doors are separated by a brick pillar, instead of a wider double door. Vertical rather than horizontal boarding is preferred for garage doors.

## 5. Impact On Neighbours

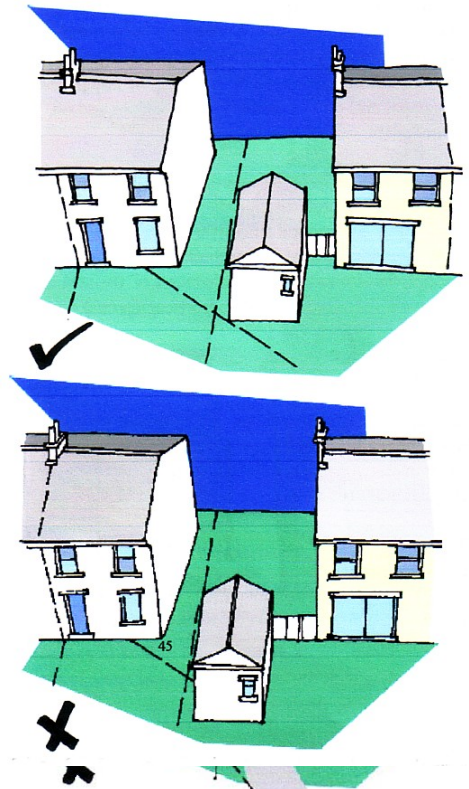
**5.1** Garages and outbuildings should not cause significant loss of daylight or sunlight to habitable rooms in neighbouring dwellings and should not represent over-dominating development. Two codes, following on from “Access to Daylight and Sunlight” published by the Building Research Establishment assist in this analysis.

**The 45 Degree Code:** Proposed outbuildings should avoid crossing the 45 degree line measured from the halfway point of the nearest habitable room window

**The 25 Degree Code** (used in combination with the 45 Degree Code): It is important to consider the likely impacts of an outbuilding in three dimensions. The outbuilding shown whilst observing the 45 degree line obstructs the 25 degree rising plane and is therefore likely to be unacceptable. The 25 degree angle is measured from cill level or the centre point of patio doors.

**5.2** It is important to remember that both codes are only guidelines not hard and fast rules. Each case will need to be dealt with on its individual merits and other factors will all need to be considered including:-

- the nature of neighbours’ rooms affected. A habitable room for the purposes of the 45 and 25 Degree Codes will include existing bedrooms, kitchens, dining rooms, sitting rooms/lounges and study/home office rooms;
- the location, size and importance of other windows lighting the same habitable rooms (e.g. the difference between primary and secondary windows – it will be inappropriate to apply the codes to secondary windows);
- the distance between the proposed garage or outbuilding walls and neighbouring windows; and;
- the aspect of the proposed garage or outbuilding to the dwelling and existing windows (e.g. south-facing rooms will receive more sunlight than north facing).



5.3 The loss of a view is not a material planning consideration and the Council cannot take this into account. However, outbuildings and garages should not appear unduly prominent or overbearing from neighbouring dwellings. They should not result in any substantial loss of privacy to adjoining dwellings and the most private areas of gardens, which will normally be those areas closest to the dwelling.

## 6. Highways And Parking

6.1 When proposing a new garage or outbuilding, it is important to retain vehicular and pedestrian sight-lines at all times. If a new vehicular access to the site from the public highway is required then this must ensure that proper highway considerations are met.

6.2 The length of driveways to the front of garages is crucial for road safety to allow vehicles to exit safely the highway and to ensure that parked vehicles do not overhang the pavement or highway. Whether attached to the dwelling or in detached form, the face of a garage door should generally be a minimum of 5.5 metres to the edge of the pavement. This minimum distance may be less if the garage design incorporates folding shutter or flush opening doors rather than the more typical “up-and-over” door design.

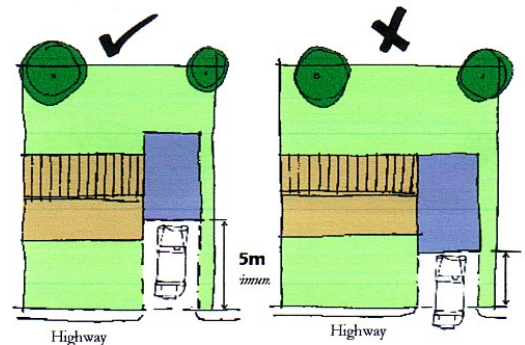
6.3 The Kent Vehicle Parking Standards give preferred internal garage sizes of 5.6m x 2.6m or 5.0m x 3.2m.

6.4 The placement of new garages and outbuildings close to the public highway, on corner plots, or where they will be visible from two roads, will need to ensure that necessary vehicular and pedestrian sight-lines are not obstructed.

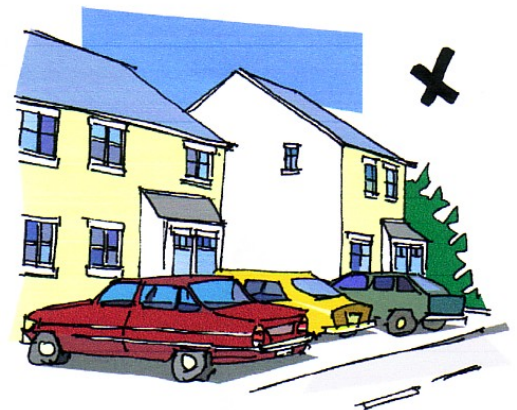
6.5 The provision of on-site turning facilities, to allow vehicles to enter and exit the site in forward gear should be retained wherever necessary for highway safety purposes. This is particularly important where the dwelling is located on a busy main road whether in the urban or rural environment. In some less heavily trafficked areas the retention of soft landscaped garden areas may be preferable if there is too little garden space to accommodate easily a turning facility both functionally and in visual impact terms. In such instances, vehicles reversing into the road will be far less likely to present a highway safety problem.

## 7. Use

7.1 The intention of use of a garage or outbuilding must be for car or other storage ancillary to the residential use, unless otherwise stated in the planning application form for a use such as a hobby workshop or a small home office facility to accommodate working at home by a family member.



*ABOVE: The principles shown are also applicable to detached garages to avoid parked vehicles overhanging the pavement or highway.*



*Converting small front gardens to car parking areas can adversely affect the character of the street scene*

**7.2** Outbuildings within the curtilage of the dwelling should not be used for business or other uses where such uses would materially change the residential character and use of the property. Parked commercial vehicles, the comings and goings of customers and employees vehicles and deliveries may all have an unacceptable impact on the character of the surrounding area and the well-being of neighbours. If it is your intention to use the proposed building for business purposes you are advised to seek further advice from the Strategic Planning Unit on this matter.

**7.3** Detached buildings specifically intended to be erected for the purposes of residential annex accommodation with facilities to allow independent use (such as kitchenettes, bathrooms and toilets) will require planning permission from the Council and will be unlikely to be viewed favourably. The Council's policy for residential annexes is that they must be designed as a directly attached extension to the dwelling.

## **8. Policy Index**

### **Kent Structure Plan 1996 – Rural Settlement**

Policies

RS1, and RS5, Environment Policies ENV3, ENV4 and ENV15

### **Ashford Borough Local Plan 2000 – Policy**

HG9

(Extensions in the countryside), HG10 (Residential annexes), GP10 (Tenterden's special character), RE1 (B1 uses within residential curtilage), EN2 (Enjoyment of homes), EN21 (Listed buildings), EN26 & EN27 (AONBs & SLAs), EN15, EN16, EN17, EN18 (Conservation areas), DP1 (Design quality) & DP2 (Standard environmental requirements)

### **Kent & Medway Structure Plan (Deposit Draft) 2003**

SS7 (Development in the countryside), E1 (protecting Kent's countryside), E3 & E4 (Protecting special landscape areas and areas of outstanding natural beauty), QL1 (Quality of development and design), QL9 (Protecting buildings of architectural or historic importance)

### **Further Information**

If you require further information or informal advice about proposals to build a garage or other outbuilding (or submitting a planning application for the same), please make written contact with :

### **Planning and Development**

Ashford Borough Council

Civic Centre

Tannery Lane

Ashford

Kent TN23 1PL

**Telephone 01233-330264**

**Direct Fax: 01233-330682**

[www.ashford.gov.uk](http://www.ashford.gov.uk)