

**Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 10**  
**Ashford Borough Council**



## **Domestic Extensions in Urban and Rural Areas**

These guidelines are intended for people who want to extend and alter their home and require planning permission from the Council. The advice and design principles in this Guidance Note seek to ensure that extensions 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 an extension. 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** As a householder in the majority of cases, you are allowed to undertake certain minor alterations and extensions to 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** Restrictions on what you are able to do 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.

**1.3** Occasionally, permitted development rights are withdrawn when a dwelling is first created e.g. conversion of a Kent barn or oast or the erection of a new farm dwelling.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 extensions may 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. 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”.

**1.4** 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.

**1.5** Finally, it is also important to remember that you are also likely to need separate approval 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 planning 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 detailed environmental, design and housing 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 strategic level 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** If your dwelling has already been significantly extended from its original form (as at 1/7/1948 or when it was first erected, if after that date) OR if it is a larger replacement of an earlier dwelling in terms of its size, scale and built form, then further extensions may be difficult to satisfactorily accommodate on the plot without detriment to the visual qualities of the street scene, the overall character of the surrounding urban area or the visual qualities of the rural landscape. For these reasons the cumulative impact of residential development will always be an important issue for the Council to consider in both urban and rural areas if the Borough's environmental quality is to be satisfactorily maintained.

**3.2** There are two guiding principles of spatial organization that assist in any analysis of cumulative impact.

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

**3.4** Accordingly, extensions to existing dwellings in the countryside can be accommodated as a matter of principle providing that the visual impact of the resultant enlarged dwelling is one that:-

- expresses a coherent design form;
- does not result in a poorly proportioned or intrusive building in the landscape; and;
- does not undermine the dominance of the landscape through unacceptable cumulative levels of householder related development at the site over time.

## Ashford, Tenterden and the Borough's villages

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

**3.6** Therefore, extensions to dwellings in these settlements can be accommodated as a matter of principle providing that the impact of the resultant enlarged dwelling is one that:-

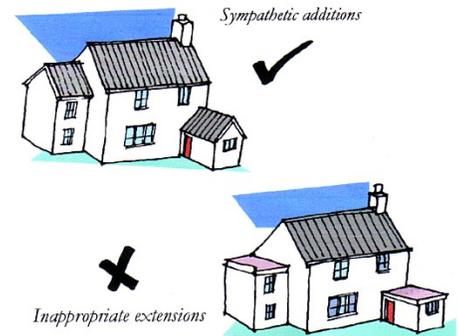
- expresses a coherent design form;
- does not result in a poorly proportioned or visually intrusive form of building within a street scene or over a wider area; and;
- does not result in over-development of the site through unacceptable cumulative levels of householder related development at the site over time to the detriment of the character and environmental quality of the surrounding area.

## 4. Impact of extensions 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. Extensions that have been designed with little regard for nearby dwellings and the most private areas of their gardens are unlikely to be viewed favourably. Extensions must be designed sensitively, taking into account people living nearby and their reasonable residential amenity.

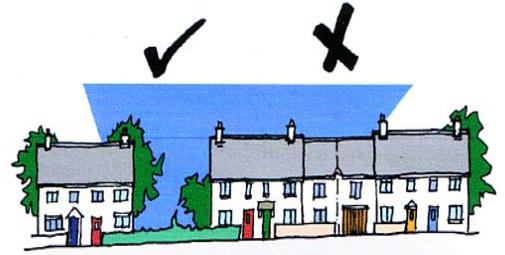
**4.2** The quality of rural village and urban street scenes is characterised by the layout and space between buildings, dwelling types and materials. The street scene usually comprises a balanced composition of materials and form, but the cumulative effect of unsympathetic extensions can destroy these qualities. With careful

**BELOW:** (1) Countryside near Egerton, (2) Queen's Street, Ashford, (3) East Cross, Tenterden, (4) The Street, Smarden



and sensitive designs, extensions can harmonise with the existing character of the area.

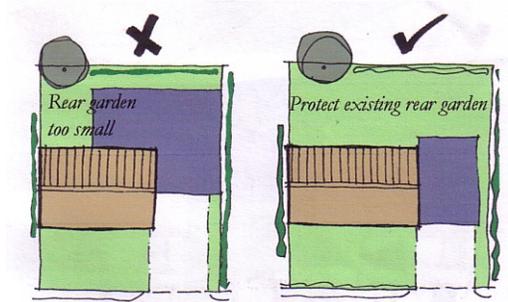
4.3 The infilling of small gaps between dwellings can, if repeated too often, cause a terracing effect which is likely to harm the established character of a street. An extension may appear harmless by itself, but if copied elsewhere, the result could be the erosion of the character of the street scene and neighbourhood. It is essential to retain sufficient space around two storey side extensions that are visible from the street, especially where “spaciousness” in the layout of dwellings is a key existing characteristic of the street scene. In all cases, a distance between dwellings should be maintained that is reflective of the predominant street scene.



4.4 Some parts of Ashford and Tenterden are characterised by large detached properties in wide plots. In these instances, proposed extensions will be expected to maintain a level of spacing that is consistent with the overall character and feel of the area in layout and density terms.



4.5 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 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 and also the individual plot characteristics such as size, shape, landscaping etc.



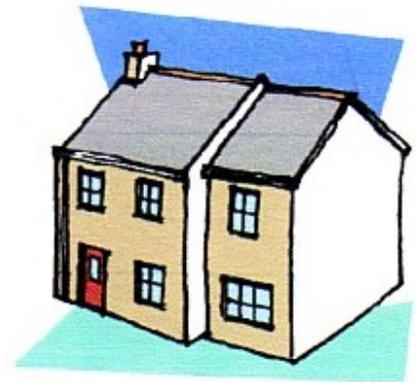
4.6 Extensions that add bedrooms or remove existing parking and/or turning facilities may require additional or replacement parking and turning facilities to be provided.

## 5. Design Themes

5.1 There are three popular methods of handling extensions. The style that is best suited to a dwelling will depend on the individual circumstances of each case. The suggested themes in this section are a guide to follow, so as to ensure that extensions are not incongruous with the existing dwelling. There are many different styles of architecture in the Borough, so your extension design should adopt the most appropriate and harmonious theme related to the context of your dwelling. Any adopted VDSs or PDSs should be taken into account.

### Reflection

5.2 This means that an extension reflects the original character of the dwelling, is subordinate to the dwelling and minimises potential impact by enabling the form of the original dwelling to be appreciated. It is appropriate for a dwelling that is part of a larger symmetrical building (semi-detached)



and where the original form of the building should not be altered. It can also assist where 'flush' detailing will be difficult to achieve due to differences between old and new materials.

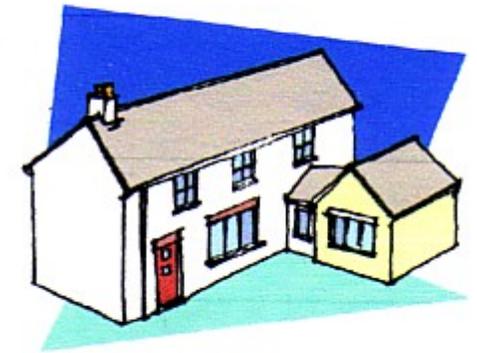
### Continuation

5.3 This means that an extension is designed so as to be not readily recognisable as an extension. It can be successful when dealing with detached and individually designed dwellings where symmetry as part of the wider street scene is not of prime importance.



### Separation & Juxtaposition

5.4 In some circumstances an extension will appear more visually correct if it is separated from the original dwelling by means of a "neutral" link. This is an appropriate design response where the original building has a distinctive character that is difficult to continue or reflect without spoiling its existing character or "something different" is appropriate and offers other advantages such as better internal space arrangements or more energy efficient forms of construction. In some cases, an overtly modern extension may be able to be made to a dwelling with vernacular detailing. The success of this approach will depend on design sensitivity and thoughtful detailing.

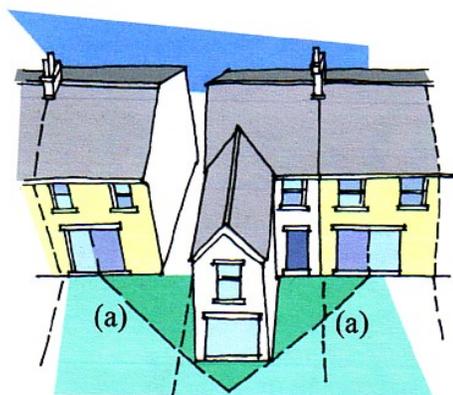
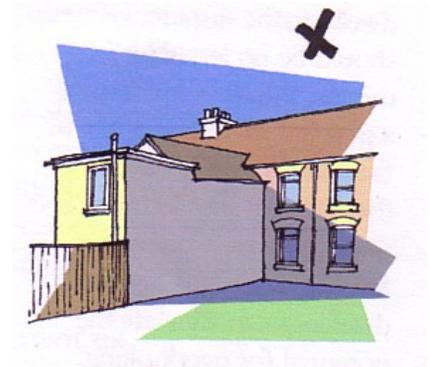


5.5 Whichever design theme is appropriate, all extensions should be subordinate to the size and scale of the existing dwelling. Care needs to be taken with external materials.

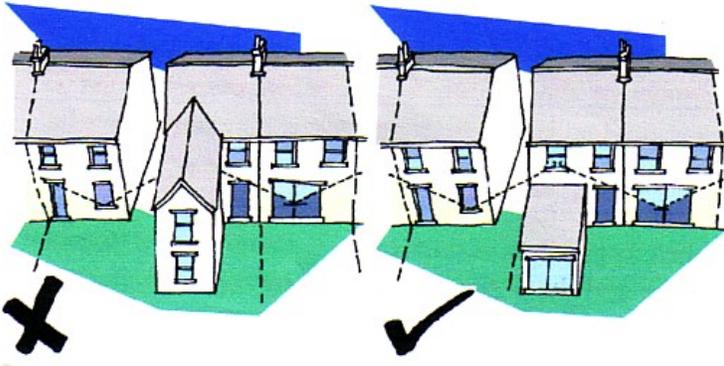
## 6. Impact On Neighbours

6.1 An extension should not cause significant loss of daylight or sunlight to habitable rooms in neighbouring dwellings and should not represent over-dominating development.

6.2 Useful guidelines to measure the likely impact of an extension on your neighbours are the "45 Degree Code" and "25 Degree Code". Their origins lie in "Access to Daylight and Sunlight" published by the Building Research Establishment. The purpose of the codes is to help ensure that an extension does not take away too much daylight or sunlight from neighbouring dwellings and does not have an overly dominant or overbearing effect. To comply with the codes, no part of an extension should cross the 45 or 25 degree lines.



*The 45 Degree Code: Line (a) indicates the 45 degree line measured halfway across the nearest habitable window that extensions should not cross.*



**The 25 Degree Code** (used in combination with the 45 Degree Code): It is important to consider the likely impacts of an extension in three dimensions. The single-storey extension does not cut across the 25 degree rising plane and is acceptable. The two-storey extension breaks the 25 degree rising plane and is therefore likely to be unacceptable.

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

- the nature of the 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 room (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 extension walls and neighbouring windows; and;
- the aspect of the proposed extension to the dwelling and existing windows (e.g. south-facing rooms will receive more sunlight than north facing).

**6.4** The loss of a view is not a material planning consideration that the Council can lawfully take into account. However, extensions 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.

**6.5** It is advisable to avoid all proposals that might diminish the privacy of neighbours, such as balconies, roof gardens and first floor conservatories. Decking attached to a dwelling on land that then falls sharply away has the practical effect of creating a raised terrace that can result in overlooking problems to neighbours if dwellings are already close together. The acceptability of all of these types of development will, ultimately, depend upon the location and individual circumstances of the property.

## 7. Roofs

**7.1** Roofs will determine the overall shape of the extension and the contribution it makes to the character of the dwelling. All two-storey extensions should have pitched roofs or match the existing dwelling in style. Two-storey flat roofs, flat roofs



in prominent positions or dummy pitched roofs will not normally be acceptable. Matching materials will be important to help create visual harmony. Slate and plain clay tiles (sand-faced tiles will weather more quickly) are the most traditional roofing materials in the Borough.

## 8. Roof Extensions

**8.1** Loft conversions are a popular method of creating extra space and can be achieved through relatively minor alterations. The roof of any dwelling is an important feature of the building and therefore interruptions to it should be kept to a minimum. It may not always be appropriate for any form of roof extension to be provided on a dwelling. Dormers proposed to the front of a dwelling need to take into account the character of the street scene and the design of the existing roof. Dormers with pitched sloping roofs located at the rear of the dwelling will tend to have less impact on the street scene but should always be designed sympathetically with the overall dwelling and existing roof style.

**8.2** In circumstances where a dormer window needs to function as a means of escape to satisfy the requirements of the Building Regulations, the location of the dormer window's vertical plane will need to be within the maximum distance from the eaves specified in the Regulations. If this cannot be achieved then means of escape may be possible by alternatives such as appropriately sized escape windows and rooflights.

**8.3** A successful roof extension depends upon achieving a combination of form, materials, window design and detailing that is sympathetic to the character of the existing building. As a general rule, dormer windows should be clearly subsidiary extensions to the original building.

## 9. Porches and Entrances

**9.1** Porches must be designed sensitively so that they do not dominate the frontage of the dwelling. Where a strong established building line exists and is an important feature of the street scene, this should be respected.

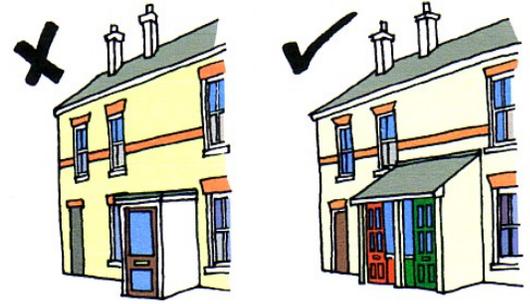
**9.2** Porches should not be built forward of the building line where this would result in an intrusive extension. This might be the case where dwellings are uniform in pattern or within a symmetrical layout within the street (e.g. terraces).

**9.3** The first visual impression of a property is often set by the character of its entrance. The aim should be to make any porch or entrance relate strongly to the character of the dwelling.



**ABOVE:** As a general planning guide: the depth of dormer (a) should not exceed half the length of the roof slope (b). The top of the dormer should also be below ridge level. This will help the dormer to sit comfortably in the roof in visual terms. Greater care will be needed on steeply sloping roofs to ensure the dormer extension is not unduly large or dominant.

This can be achieved by ensuring style, proportions and materials are all sympathetic to the dwelling. In some cases, a development serving two joined properties may give a more robust and visually pleasing character. Ready-made porches may be cheaper but they may not suit the style of a particular dwelling.



## 10. Materials

**10.1** Generally, materials for an extension should be in keeping with the locality and relate to the existing dwelling. In some cases conditions may be imposed on the grant of planning permission that require approval from the Council for the materials proposed. Natural materials such as clay tiles, slates and stock facing bricks should be used wherever possible and will normally be essential in sensitive areas such as conservation areas, AONBs, and Special Landscape Areas, to help maintain their visual character and quality. Their use will tend to be a prerequisite when dealing with extensions to listed buildings.

## 11. 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, GP10 (Tenterden's special character), 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 extend your house or submitting a planning application please contact the:

**Strategic Planning Unit**  
Ashford Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
Tannery Lane  
Ashford  
Kent TN23 1PL  
**Telephone 01233-637311**  
**Direct Fax:01233-330682**  
[www.ashford.gov.uk](http://www.ashford.gov.uk)