

## Householder Design Guide



**Regeneration & Planning  
(Development Management)**

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## **PART A – Introduction and Background**

### **A1. General Introduction**

Lancaster City Council receives hundreds of planning applications every year from householders seeking to improve and extend their homes. This guide has been compiled to assist householders, and where appropriate their architects, with their applications.

This is not a Supplementary Planning Document, though it is in general conformity with national and local planning policy that promotes high quality design and local distinctiveness. It is an informal design guide to advise householders on the type of proposals that the Local Planning Authority is likely to deem to be appropriate. It sets out general principles, which will apply in many cases, though the Local Planning Authority acknowledges will not apply in all situations. Each application will be assessed on its own merits.

The places in which we live, work and play have a bearing on our quality of life. Lancaster City Council prides itself on the quality of its environment, whether it is urban, rural or coastal, and seeks to protect and enhance this asset for the benefit of all.

Good design is fundamental to achieving this. This guide seeks to assist householders in shaping their proposals to realise this objective by complementing the design of their homes, harmonising the character of the area and protecting the amenity enjoyed by the existing and future residents of both their home and their neighbours.

It is also intended to provide householders with advice that, if followed, will help quick and positive planning decisions to be made.

Householders are advised to use a qualified architect or designer to prepare their planning application. The best local architects and designers are those that will work with you to gain a full understanding of your requirements and develop the best design solution. When considering engaging someone to design your scheme, you may wish to ask about their portfolio of previous work and best practice.

The Local Planning Authority would advise householders to discuss their plans with their neighbours before applying for planning permission. Whilst the Local Planning Authority will consult adjoining neighbours to the proposal site, to do so in advance can help shape mutually acceptable schemes and potentially prevent unforeseen delays occurring later in the process.

### **A2. Do I Require Planning Permission?**

Some alterations and extensions can be undertaken without the need to apply for planning permission as many homes benefit from Permitted Development Rights. However, these rights (or some of these rights) do not apply where:

- Your home is Listed;
- Your home falls within a designated area (such as a Conservation Area, National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty);
- Your home falls within an Article 4 area;

- Your home has had its Permitted Development Rights removed (either entirely or conditions applied restricting specific works, such as new windows or doors)

Please note that permitted development allowances only apply to houses and bungalows, and not to flats or maisonettes. Other consents may be required if your house is Listed.

Householders can formally apply to the Local Planning Authority for a Permitted Lawful Development Certificate to acquire official documentation that the proposed works to your property fall under permitted development rights. Further information is available on the Planning pages of the Council's website.

Lastly, the Neighbour Consultation Scheme was introduced by the Government in 2013. This Scheme only applies to larger single-storey rear extensions which are permitted for three years between 30 May 2013 and 30 May 2016. This means that rear extensions of between four and eight metres in depth for detached houses and between three and six metres in depth for all other houses, must apply through the Scheme. These measurements are to be taken from the rear elevation of the original dwelling (i.e. excludes any subsequent extensions). The Scheme can be used by a householder to notify the Local Planning Authority of the intention to build a larger single-storey rear extension, though no work can commence until the process has been completed. The works must be completed no later than 30 May 2016. Again, further information is available on the Planning pages of the Council's website.

### **A3. How Do I Apply For Planning Permission?**

Planning applications can be submitted online (via the Planning Portal) or can be posted directly to the Local Planning Authority. Electronic copies are the preferred option as these take less time to process. Householder applications should be accompanied by a planning application form (including a certificate for confirmation that all the proposed works fall within the applicant's ownership, or adequate notice has been served on the other landowner(s)), an application fee and relevant plans. Ideally the plans should be drafted by a competent architect or plan drawer and must be to scale. For further information on the Local Planning Authority's validation requirements, application forms and fees, and local architects (as listed by the Lancaster and Westmorland Society of Architects) please refer to the Planning pages of the Council's website.

## **PART B – General Design Guidance**

### **B1. Scale, Massing and Form**

The scale and form of extensions are critical to their acceptability. An extension should normally be subservient to the original house (in width, depth and height) except in exceptional circumstances.

The form of an extension is one of the most important factors of a successful design. The form should respond to that of the house so the extension is well proportioned. Extensions should have similar proportions to the original building, although on a smaller scale. Large extensions, which dominate the original building, should be avoided. The extension should reflect local distinctiveness in scale, proportions and height.

Careful consideration should be given to when altering a semi-detached property to ensure that the extension does not unbalance the appearance of the pair.

Roof shape is critical to massing. The style and scale of a new roof should always complement that of the original building. Hipped roofs should generally only be used if the original building is fitted with hips. The pitch of a proposed roof should match that of the original building (or the roof of adjoining properties in the case of terrace properties). Where flat roofs are proposed they must be sensitively designed, and are likely to be more acceptable with contemporary proposals rather than traditional schemes.

Some proposals involve a combination of front, side and/or rear extensions. While each individual extension may be acceptable, the cumulative impact of the whole scheme may seriously alter the scale and appearance of the property to the detriment of the property and the streetscene. Therefore where multiple extensions are proposed they will need to be carefully designed so they do not produce a cluttered appearance, undermine architectural style and/or adversely affect the local environment.

Any extensions or alterations should be in keeping with the existing dwelling and any others attached. They should retain or complement the existing character, design/materials, scale and proportions of the main dwelling and must not unbalance any other attached dwellings.

### **B2. Siting and Streetscene**

Many of the issues that relate to siting are dealt with elsewhere in this document in more detail. It is important, however, that issues about siting an extension are fully addressed prior to detailed design work being undertaken. Proposals should respond to the context and reinforce local character.

Alterations and extensions should make a positive contribution to their surroundings. They should respect, and not seek to change, identified building lines and the pattern and spatial arrangement of buildings, including the spaces between them. The following general rules should be taken into account when designing an extension:

- Front extensions or projections beyond the building line will normally not be permitted
- Corner plots are very prominent - buildings on corner plots may be difficult to extend and special design skill will be required (again building lines should be respected)
- A terracing effect<sup>1</sup> should be avoided
- The siting, scale and orientation of extensions should avoid unacceptable levels of overlooking and overshadowing of private areas of neighbouring houses and gardens
- New development should not overbear its neighbours, and therefore should be set back from all site boundaries and be of an appropriate scale
- No part of an extension should overhang a boundary (e.g. rainwater goods, balconies) unless there is a good reason for doing so (notice will need to be served on the other landowner(s))
- Extensions, where possible, should be sited to preserve existing trees and hedges
- Extensions should be of a scale and sited appropriately to ensure sufficient garden is retained
- Extensions should not result in the loss of off-street parking behind the building line to preserve the streetscene / character of the area where appropriate
- Extensions should not prevent the natural surveillance of the street, and in particular front doors should be visible from the street

Where there is a clear building line, extensions should not generally project beyond it. In more informal modern layouts, local design, character and layout will be taken into account.

An extension should not be visually detrimental to the character or appearance of the existing house, streetscene or the surrounding area. A design should evolve that makes optimum use of the existing building whilst providing an extension that reflects or complements the character of the building and adjacent properties. It is therefore highly recommended that an appraisal of the dwelling's setting is carried out so its context is understood and the design is informed by the findings. Any supporting information should be submitted with the planning application to support alternative designs.

The relationship of existing buildings to the street and each other, the massing of the buildings and the spaces between them all needs to be considered. An extension should respect any regularity and width of spaces between existing houses and the visual effect of these spaces when significant in the street scene. Closing gaps between properties and creating terraces, raising rooflines, extending in front of the adjacent properties, and changing the overall shape and scale of the property could all have an impact on the streetscene, which should be avoided.

Where a house is one of a group, similar in appearance and significant in the streetscene, the effect of an extension to that house on the appearance of the group, as well as the individual house, should be carefully considered.

An extension at the rear of a dwelling should not be so extensive in relation to the size of the rear garden or yard that the enlarged house would constitute over-development of the site that would be out of character with the area (see Garden Space).

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<sup>1</sup> Terracing refers to 2 storey side extensions which result in an unacceptable reduction in width or total loss of the gap between properties to create the impression of a continuous building frontage

Where the style and facing materials of the extension do not reflect that of the subject dwelling and the surrounding properties, care should be taken to ensure that the appearance of the property and the street scene is not diminished (see Architectural Detailing and Materials).

It is important to note there are circumstances where it is impossible to design an acceptable extension due to the sensitivity of the site, limited space or the relationship of neighbouring properties.

### **B3. Architectural Detailing and Materials**

It is the design and composition of various building elements that combine to create the overall appearance of any dwelling and, to be successful, close attention needs to be given to the detail of these elements within the design of any extension. The external appearance of an extension should be well proportioned, with fenestration well balanced in the elevations and should respect the style and character of the original house.

An extension may be appropriate in terms of the siting, scale and massing but if little or no consideration is given to regarding the detail of the design it is very likely that the extension will be unacceptable. As a general rule, the details of design should take a direct lead from the original building (and where appropriate adjoining dwellings), as this will achieve a degree of coherence between the original building and extension. Extensions should normally be constructed of materials that match the original building (see below), and detailing should respect or complement local styles and features to maintain local distinctiveness. Contemporary design that respects traditional forms and uses traditional materials creatively can add to the richness and interest of an area (see Contemporary Design), but as a general rule any extension or alteration should seek to replicate the detailing on the original dwelling, including windows, doors, stone/brick work, and other external finishes.

However, it is important that an extension does not appear older than the original house, especially when extending historic properties. The use of historical styles must be applied sensitively with an understanding of their essential design qualities. Replica period features of poor quality should be avoided.

The following details must be considered when designing an extension:

External walls - The materials and their finishes chosen for an extension are very important and should be related as closely as possible to those used in the original building. In many cases for the walls this is likely to mean seeking to obtain the best match of bricks or stones, both in colour, tone and texture, and for mortar colour, pointing and jointing. This can be more difficult, particularly where original bricks or stones are old and weathered and in pre-metric sizes. If materials can be salvaged and reused, this can assist in blending old and new. In some circumstances high-quality modern materials that complement those of the existing property may be more appropriate.

Many of the best residential designs display innovative, decorative details that can help give a dwelling a special character and enhance the appearance of the street. Such architectural detailing on the existing property should be repeated, where appropriate, on any extension. This would include the continuation of plinths and stringcourses, sills and lintels, pillars or

pilasters, decorative brickwork and quoins, bargeboards and cornices, fascias and/or decorative tiling, coursing and mortaring of the walling material, as they are important elements that should be included in the overall design. The use and application of materials should respect the local techniques and traditions and be in sympathy with the original house and neighbours as appropriate (e.g. stone should be laid to course and course heights and block sizes should be as the original house).

Windows (Fenestration) - The external appearance of the extension should be well proportioned, with window openings which reflect the style of openings in the original building (e.g. an extension to a house with windows of vertical proportion should not have windows that are square or horizontal in proportion). It is also vitally important that the number and arrangement of the windows in an extension are sympathetic to the original building by reflecting the same ratio between solid wall and window. The introduction of large windows may not sit comfortably with the building or neighbouring buildings and may be unacceptable. The proportions and style of proposed windows should be identified and included within the design process. A simple way to replicate the proportion of a window, or other element, is to establish the correct proportions by completing a scale drawing of the original opening, and then establishing the angle of a diagonal across the window. This angle should then be applied when designing windows of differing sizes to ensure compatibility.

In most cases the windows for an extension should be broadly similar in size and proportions (vertical or horizontal) and be positioned to match the original symmetry and pattern to those in the existing building. Any new or altered windows should echo the style and detailing of existing windows, including opening method (e.g. horizontal or vertical sliding sashes or casement as appropriate). They should be of a similar material and will also generally need to use the same pattern of glazing bars (mullions and transoms) as used in the windows of the original dwelling. Window openings should be carefully applied, taking into account the cills, lintels, jamb design and fixing within the openings in the original building. The depth of reveal should be consistent with those of the house if it is intended to replicate the style. This adds shadow and interest to façades – simple but often effective.

Bay windows are a very prominent design feature, usually on the front façade of houses. Removal or substantial alteration is likely to destroy an important part of the character of the building, and erode the design quality of the street. If incorrectly designed and constructed, the results are damaging.

Doors and porches – Some properties benefit from very finely detailed door surrounds to form important design features at the front of the dwelling. The addition of a new porch or alterations to the existing door or porch can spoil or hide this detailing. The character of a property can be damaged or destroyed by the alteration or addition of new doors that differ from the style and character of the original. Care is required when applying the treatment of doors, including lintels, jamb design, fixing within the openings, canopies and enclosures.

Roof details - Roofs should match the main roof in terms of shape, pitch and materials. Care should also be given regarding the manner in which slates are laid (e.g. in diminishing or regular courses). Generally roof overhangs (including fascias, soffits and rainwater goods), gable treatments and verges should be consistent with those of the existing dwelling. However,



where existing details are very ornate, exact replicas may be inappropriate to a small extension, in which case simpler details may be more appropriate.

Chimneys - As well as their practical function, chimneystacks and pots can add character to an extension and a roofscape. Where stacks exist on the original building, the inclusion of new stacks of a similar design can assist in marrying an extension to the original building.

Rooflights and solar panels – Rooflights should be set flush with the roof slope and should be used sparingly. Schemes that propose oversized rooflights, a proliferation of rooflights and/or an imbalanced alignment of rooflights are unlikely to be supported as such application of these window types can adversely affect the appearance of the roof. In Conservation Areas, small conservation styled rooflights should be utilized. Solar and photovoltaic panels should project less than 200mm from the roof's surface and be fixed parallel to the roof slope. To reduce their visual impact they should be situated to the rear of the property; those to the front slopes in Conservation Areas will be resisted.

Materials - The choice of building materials should reflect and reinforce the character of the area. Generally the materials should match those of the house in type, colour and detail, including the way in which they are used (e.g. coursing and pointing), in order to achieve a degree of coherence between original building and extension. The materials used in an extension or alteration often decide its appearance and impact on the street scene. Poorly-matched bricks, stone, slate, tiles and even mortar can ruin a good design and stand out in the street. The roof is an important element because it is often the most visible. Where the roof of the original dwelling is covered in natural slate, it is not appropriate to use imitation slate on the extension roof, though it is acknowledged that some materials are no longer made. Reusing existing slates or second-hand supplies can be a solution.

#### **B4. Overlooking, Over-shadowing and Over-dominance**

##### Overlooking

Extensions should avoid overlooking neighbouring properties and gardens. Unacceptable overlooking occurs when there is an inadequate distance between windows in an extension and the windows or private amenity space of a neighbouring property. An extension should not cause significant loss of privacy. The guiding principle is that extensions should be located and windows orientated, to prevent direct overlooking of habitable rooms or areas of private amenity space that belong to nearby properties. Overlooking can be made worse if there are differences in ground level.

Therefore the factors to be taken into account include the design and height of the properties concerned, the window positions and the rooms they serve, differences in levels and existing extensions.

Most properties on housing estates are overlooked to some extent. The Council must decide whether the proposal makes an existing situation substantially worse. As such, certain standards should be met:

1. Where principal windows will allow views to other principal windows of a neighbouring property, a minimum distance of 21 metres must be maintained.

2. Where principal windows directly face a blank elevation, a minimum distance of 12 metres must be maintained.

These standards should be met in most circumstances. However, every proposal is determined on its own merits and therefore in some situations lesser or greater distances will be applied (e.g. dense urban areas, changes to topography etc).

The spaces between dwellings are designed to ensure adequate light, space and privacy. They are also designed to allow some extensions but reducing these distances below the minimum standards will normally be unacceptable. Where these separation distances cannot be achieved, privacy may be achieved by:

- Careful consideration of floor plans can place those rooms which need no natural light, or where windows can be obscurely glazed, to face the neighbours;
- Orientating windows to face in other directions (positioning of windows to give oblique views of neighbouring windows can resolve direct overlooking);
- Consideration being given to the height of an extension and its proximity to boundaries; and
- Using suitable screening (especially at ground floor level). The heights of any existing boundary screen and its degree of permanence need to be considered. However, it should be noted that a vegetation screen has seasonal variation that will affect levels of privacy.

Where appropriate, conditions may be used to protect the privacy of neighbouring residents, such as the use of obscured glazing or non-opening windows (or windows with very restricted openings).

Similarly to protect privacy, Juliet balconies, the use of flat roofs as balconies, raised terraces, larger windows, and dormer windows close to the boundary where overlooking would become an issue will not be acceptable.

### Overshadowing

Neighbours are entitled to adequate daylight. Insensitive extensions can easily deprive windows of the adjoining dwelling(s) of daylight and sunlight. This is overshadowing. Extensive overshadowing of a neighbouring building or amenity space is unacceptable. The extent of shadowing maybe difficult to determine as it will depend upon the size and position of the extension, the variation in ground levels and the orientation of the extension.

Daylight can be achieved without direct sunlight but depending on orientation and solar path, overly large extensions, close to the boundary with an adjacent dwelling and its windows, may well affect light levels. As a result, due consideration needs to be given to the scale, massing and form of the extension (including the design of its roof) as well as taking account of the position of windows including rooms they serve to adjacent and/or adjoining dwellings.

The Council uses the '45-degree rule' to help assess impact upon the amenities of the neighbouring dwelling(s) and to protect from overshadowing or obstruction caused by large extensions on or close to the boundary.

When assessing the impact of the proposal there will be 2 key issues relating to the affected property that would need to be considered:

1. The use of the affected room (e.g. non-habitable rooms are not as important in terms of the impact of daylight and sunlight); and
2. Whether the affected window is the primary light source for that room. If the room has other unaffected windows, depending on their size and orientation, these may serve the room with adequate natural light.

The effect of overshadowing to gardens of adjacent and/or adjoining dwellings is often ignored. Insensitively designed extensions can cause loss of daylight and sunlight to gardens and can reduce the level of residential amenity associated with the affected dwelling. The size and use of the affected part of a neighbouring garden will be taken into consideration in assessing potential overshadowing from an extension.

Any proposed works should not cause a material loss of light to any main window of a habitable room in an adjacent or adjoining property, or materially reduce the amount of sunlight currently enjoyed by a neighbouring garden (this is different to “right to light” which is a legal matter).

#### Overdominance

Overdominance can result both from the scale of the proposed extension and its position in relation to a neighbouring property. It does not necessarily involve overlooking or overshadowing. Both buildings and gardens can be dominated by proposed extensions and both are equally important considerations.

Whether a proposal is overbearing depends upon a number of factors, including the topography, the height and length of the extension, the shape of the extension, the number (or lack) of openings, and the proximity of the extension to the boundary. Therefore the acceptable length of an extension will be determined by its height, the ground levels, distance back from the boundary and also the size of the neighbouring garden/amenity space. It is worth noting that even single storey extensions can have an overbearing impact upon neighbours in some cases.

It may sometimes mean that, although a proposal is otherwise acceptable, if it has an oppressive impact and causes significant detriment to the amenity of occupiers of the neighbouring properties it is unacceptable because of its impact on adjoining properties. This is a situation that can only be judged by a site visit.

Landscaping can help but unless it already exists and is well established, it will not overcome problems of domination. Further planting can also increase the problem and needs to be considered carefully.

## **B5. Parking, Garden Space, Landscaping and Security**

### Parking

Extensions will not normally be allowed if they have the potential to reduce off-road parking. One parking space (enclosed or otherwise) should be retained behind the building line to preserve the appearance of the streetscene where appropriate. Where works would result in the loss of a parking space this must be replaced in most circumstances. A parking space must be at least 5m in length and at least 2.5m in width to accommodate a car and allow the driver to exit the vehicle. Car doors should not open over the neighbour's property. A driveway should accommodate at least one vehicle length of 5m (excluding any service verge or footpath). However, it is not acceptable to use the entire front garden as alternative parking if this detracts from the appearance of the property and the streetscene.

The design of extensions should not involve the loss of existing off-street parking provision, unless it can be demonstrated, by the submission of a site plan, that alternative provision can be made elsewhere within the curtilage, without causing detriment to the overall streetscene, creating an unacceptable loss of amenity space, adversely affecting highway safety or harming the amenities of neighbours.

Consideration of parking arrangements is particularly important if you are thinking of either converting an integrated or attached garage to living accommodation or building on or over an existing garage or driveway. Extensions which prevent the parking of cars within the curtilage of the dwelling will not be acceptable. There should be adequate off-street parking to serve the dwelling (please refer to Lancashire County Council's parking standards).

New or altered vehicular accesses and boundary treatments can affect road safety, the appearance of the property and the streetscene, and therefore need to be carefully considered from the outset. Creating a new access onto a classified road requires planning permission in its own right.

On main roads, such as classified roads or roads with a speed limit greater than 30mph or heavily trafficked roads, turning space should be provided within the site. Proposals that result in the loss of existing manoeuvring facilities are unlikely to be acceptable. Where gates are proposed adjacent to such highways, they should be set back to allow a vehicle to pull off the carriageway even when they are shut. In all circumstances, where gates or garages are proposed close or adjacent to the highway, the gates and garage doors must be designed so that they do not open across the footpath or carriageway.

### Garden Space

It is important that reasonable amenity space is retained to existing dwellings, not only to ensure visual and amenity standards for the existing dwelling, but to safeguard the privacy and amenity of adjacent residents. Every property needs an area of private open space or garden for domestic leisure activities, drying clothes, sheds and storage (including bin and cycle storage). Therefore, extensions should not take up the entire length of the garden or reduce it to such an extent that it is unusable and out of scale with the house. The usable<sup>2</sup> garden space should not fall below 50m<sup>2</sup> after the construction of the extension (though there will be

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<sup>2</sup> Usable garden space is land under the exclusive control of the occupier and within the curtilage of the dwelling house. It only includes land that has been adequately screened, usually to the rear and side of the property, and excludes driveways

circumstances that due to the urban grain of an area a smaller or larger area would be more appropriate).

Enough private garden space should be retained after any extensions have been built to ensure that adequate separation distances are maintained between neighbouring houses to prevent overlooking between windows. In most cases it will also be necessary to keep a larger area to avoid a cramped appearance and to maintain the character of the area.

### Landscaping

Trees, hedgerows and other landscape features are hugely important in terms of their ecological and landscape value. Wherever possible these landscape features should be retained and extensions should be designed to accommodate them. Likewise extensions should preserve hard landscape features including walls and railings where these make a positive contribution to the character of the area. While the removal of trees and hedges is sometimes unavoidable, the Council will take account of the loss of amenity value and impact on the street scene in making its decision.

The retention of soft and/or hard landscaping can sometimes help reduce the impact of the works and maintain privacy and character. However, it should also be recognised that significant screening could itself result in the loss of outlook or character. Furthermore landscaping and vegetation screens cannot necessarily be relied upon to provide a permanent solution as they are subject to seasonal change and are potentially removable, though the Council may consider it appropriate to require the retention of existing and proposed planting where necessary.

Proposals that would require the felling of trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders, trees in Conservation Areas<sup>3</sup> or other trees that contribute significantly to the character of an area, or that could endanger its health (e.g. by severing its roots), are rarely considered to be acceptable. Instead, alternative methods of providing additional accommodation should be explored. As such, extensions will not normally be allowed where the extension will be overshadowed by surrounding tree(s), as this could lead to pressure to remove the tree(s) in question. Where trees are affected by a proposal either in terms of being identified for removal or being in close proximity to the extension or alteration, the submitted plans must accurately show the trees' locations, crown spread and root protection areas, and application accompanied by an Arboricultural Implications Assessment. They will need to also be protected during construction. Where removal is agreed, replacement trees and/or hedges will normally be required in line with the Council's Tree Policy (please refer to "D7 – Trees" for further information).

### Security

The security of the extended and adjoining properties should not be prejudiced by the design of extensions or alterations. Therefore it is important to consider at an early stage the impact the proposal may have on the security of the original house and the neighbouring properties. Security measures should preserve the character of the street scene and the main house by being unobtrusive and designed as an integral part of the overall proposal. The design of an

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<sup>3</sup> Protected trees (TPOs) and trees in Conservation Areas cannot be felled, lopped or topped without the Council's consent

extension should not create an opportunity to gain unlawful access to the property, particularly to first floor windows via drainpipes and the roof of the extension. Extensions should not prevent the natural surveillance of surrounding properties. In particular, front doors should be clearly visible from the street to prevent potential intruders being hidden from view. Security advice can be sought from Lancashire Constabulary.

## **PART C – Specific Design Guidance**

### **C1. Side Extensions**

When designing a side extension there are a number of key principles to consider:

- The eaves height of the extension should be no higher than the eaves on the existing dwelling
- The extension should be noticeably set back from the front elevation of the existing dwelling (for semi-detached and terraced properties)
- The ridge height of the extension should be noticeably lower than the ridge line of the existing dwelling (for semi-detached and terraced properties)
- The extension should be set in from the side boundary
- 2 storey side extensions should be capped with a pitched/hipped roof to match existing dwelling
- Corner plots – significant extensions beyond existing side elevation (especially where strong building line exists along the street) should not be permitted
- Corner plots – both the front and side elevations of the extension should have active frontages (i.e. walls should be broken up with a reasonable window/door to wall ratio rather than be blank to provide an active and animated frontage to the highway)

### **C2. Rear Extensions**

When designing a rear extension there are a number of key principles to consider:

- The relationship between the extension and windows serving habitable rooms on the adjoining or adjacent neighbouring dwelling must be respected (45 degree rule<sup>4</sup>)
- The rear extension should not have such a significant footprint that an inadequate amount of outdoor private amenity space is retained
- 2 storey rear extensions should not have first floor windows that can directly overlook any adjoining garden or into a habitable room of a neighbouring property (i.e. they should be fitted with fixed obscure glazing or be sufficiently separated from boundaries or neighbouring windows, though no obscure glazing should be applied to a habitable room's principal window)
- 2 storey rear extensions should be capped with a pitched/hipped roof to match existing dwelling

### **C3. Front Extensions**

When designing an extension to the front (principal) elevation there are a number of key principles to consider:

- Significant extensions beyond existing front elevation (especially where a strong building line exists along the street) are very unlikely to be supported

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<sup>4</sup> Note that the 45 degree rule is applied differently depending whether it is a ground or first floor window

#### **C4. Roof Extensions and Alterations (including dormers)**

When designing alterations and extensions to an existing roof there are a number of key principles to consider:

- Rooflights/dormers should be well clear of the ridge line, eaves and edges/verges (or party wall) of the dwelling's roof – roof lifts should not be permitted
- Where several rooflights/dormers are proposed they should line up horizontally with each other
- Rooflights/dormers should line up vertically with the existing openings on the elevation of the house
- Large flat or shallow mono-pitched roof dormers will not be permitted where visible from a public highway or from the public domain
- Dormers should be sited discreetly, ideally on the rear elevation
- Dormer windows must be no larger than the windows on the main elevation of the dwelling whilst ensuring that the proportion of solid to void (blank face to window) is not imbalanced
- The face and cheeks of a dormer should be clad in a material to match the existing roof covering (or where appropriate a contemporary design (e.g. lead or zinc clad) should be applied)
- Dormers must be proportionate with the overall roof area and not be overly dominant

#### **C5. Garages and Outbuildings**

When designing garages and outbuildings there are a number of key principles to consider:

- Should be subservient and proportionate to main dwelling (modest in height and size)
- Should not be significantly greater in height than a normal domestic single storey extension
- Sited well in relation to the dwelling - set back from front elevation of the dwelling
- Sited well in relation to neighbouring properties and their gardens – to avoid overbearing impacts
- Where visible from the public domain, the roof design and pitch should match the existing dwelling
- Double garages should be served by 2 single doors, not 1 large double door

#### **C6. Other Works**

When designing other works to a residential property there are a number of key principles to consider:

- Raised decking, terraces, patios and balconies must be sited and designed to protect the privacy of neighbouring properties and their gardens
- Alterations to boundary treatment must respect highway safety, the appearance of the streetscene and the amenity of the adjoining properties (planning permission is required for any boundary treatment over 1m in height that is adjacent to a highway or 2m elsewhere)



- Alterations to ground levels could be deemed to be engineering works and therefore require planning permission. Advice should be sought from the Local Planning Authority prior to works commencing.

## **PART D – Other Important Information and Advice**

### **D1. Permitted Development Rights**

Some alterations and extensions can be undertaken without the need to apply for planning permission as many homes benefit from Permitted Development Rights. This is governed by The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 and subsequent amendments. Parts 1 and 2 of Schedule 2 of the Order sets out what householders are able to do without the benefit of planning permission (for Part 40, please refer to Renewable Energy). However, the Order also sets out conditions that must be met. However, the Local Planning Authority may have removed Permitted Development Rights either directly from a property (via planning conditions), or indirectly via an Article 4 Direction (on an area in which the property is situated), or the property may be in a designated area that means you will need to apply for planning permission for certain types of work which do not need consent in other areas. It is therefore strongly recommended that you check with the Local Planning Authority prior to commencing works; preferably before designing a scheme. Please note that permitted development allowances only apply to houses and bungalows, and not to flats or maisonettes.

### **D2. Sustainable Construction and Renewable Energy**

All buildings consume energy, for heating, lighting and/or powering equipment. Therefore materials, fittings and construction methods should be used, where possible, to reduce the amount of energy required to power the extension. These include the use of energy efficient lighting for internal and external areas, the use of suitable insulation to reduce heat loss/gain, the installation of energy efficient (eco-labelled) white goods, and the use of low or zero carbon technologies to meet the heating requirements. The Council encourages development that reduces its carbon dioxide emissions rate.

The on-site production of energy from renewable sources to help meet the operational requirements of the dwelling is something the Council supports. Many of the technologies are applicable at a micro-scale for integration into existing or extended structures.

The installation of appliances, such as solar photovoltaic and solar thermal equipment, ground source heat pumps, water source heat pumps, and flues relating to biomass and combined heat and power systems are referred to within the recent publication of Part 40 to Schedule 2 to The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. These changes to the Permitted Development rights allows householders to install specified types of microgeneration equipment on or within the curtilage of dwelling houses or flats subject to certain criteria without the need to apply for planning permission.

### **D3. Barn Conversions**

Barn conversions, if sensitively undertaken in accordance with planning policy, retain key architectural detailing and agricultural character. Alterations and extensions to barn conversions are generally not encouraged but where proposed they require careful consideration. Conservatories and porches are very unlikely to be supported as these are very domestic in appearance. Likewise alterations that remove or obscure key features, such as the

original barn doors/opening, are likely to be looked upon unfavourably. However, appropriately located, traditionally constructed lean-to styled extensions may be permitted. New openings in the roof and walls should be kept to a minimum and be of an appropriate size.

#### **D4. Heritage**

A Listed building is defined by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as a building of architectural or historic interest which has been included in a list compiled by the Secretary of State. The protection conferred by listing also covers any object or structure fixed to the building or any freestanding object or building within the curtilage. The Council has a schedule of the Listed buildings in the District and a copy of the list description of each.

It is an offence to demolish a Listed building, or to extend or alter it in a manner that would affect its character without having first obtained Listed Building Consent from the local authority.

Listed Building Consent is required for all extensions and alterations to a Listed building (both internal and external) or to buildings or structures in its curtilage, whether or not planning permission is needed. Extensions to Listed buildings or new outbuildings within the curtilage must be sensitively designed and of the highest quality. An application to extend a house that is Listed should be accompanied by clear information to show the full implications of the extension and alterations to the fabric and character of the building.

Permitted development rights are reduced if the house is in a Conservation Area in order to preserve the special character or appearance of the area. The Council can impose further restrictions in Conservation Areas under Article 4(2) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order. There are a number of Article 4(2) areas within the District. However, it is advisable to consult the Council to ascertain whether the house is in a Conservation Area and, if so, whether there are any Article 4(2)s in place.

#### **D5. Contemporary Design**

The Local Planning Authority welcomes contemporary design which respects local character. In some cases, householders may wish to pursue a scheme that is modern in its approach rather than apply a more traditional design. Where design and materials of the proposed extension do not match the existing house, they should complement the host dwelling. A contemporary approach, providing bespoke, unique designs can offer a more imaginative solution to an unusual dwelling type or an exciting contrast to a traditional building. However, the approach is still required to take account of the design issues outlined in this document. Contemporary solutions need not be harmful or detract from the character of an area and indeed, if well designed, they can make a positive contribution to the streetscene, creating visual stimulus and interest. Whilst Design and Access Statements are not required to accompany a householder planning application, it is often helpful that a design statement is submitted justifying the approach taken and how the design complies with the principles of good design, townscape and amenity. In certain cases, with great care and sensitivity, a contemporary design that reinterprets local character may be acceptable, providing that it complements the original building. The quality of the design is paramount to the success of such extensions.

## **D6. Personal Circumstances**

Personal circumstances, such as disability or specific requirements of minority groups, may make it difficult to provide the necessary facilities within the guidance set out in this guide. The Local Planning Authority may interpret these guidelines flexibly in such circumstances, but proposals that significantly deviate from them are still unlikely to be appropriate. Consideration of personal circumstances will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. An application should be accompanied by a Doctor's letter so the specific needs of the individual are understood and reflected in the design.

## **D7. Trees**

Local Planning Authorities can ensure the protection of threatened trees by making Tree Protection Orders (TPOs) in the interests of amenity under the Town and Country (Trees) Regulations 1999. The Council holds TPO records. Proposals which would involve the loss of trees that contribute to the character of an area will not be permitted. It is an offence to cut down, lop, top or cause other wilful damage to a tree that is subject to an Order or within a Conservation Area. Unless a tree that is subject to a TPO or in a Conservation Area is diseased or dangerous, it is unlikely that approval will be given for cutting it down. If approval is given replacement trees will be required at a ratio of 3 to 1, in line with the Council's Tree Policy.

## **D8. Protected Species**

Species such as bats, which use roof spaces as roost or hibernation sites, and birds which nest under the eaves of buildings are protected from harm by law. Applications for development that involve alterations to existing roof spaces of churches, barns or any buildings (or disturbances to trees or hedges) within 100m of fresh water or a woodland may have an impact upon protected species.

In such cases, the planning application will need to be accompanied by a survey report undertaken at the appropriate time of year, together with details of mitigation measures to safeguard the protected species from the adverse effects of the development (please refer to the Council's Planning Application Validation Guide). The Council may impose planning conditions or obligations on planning permissions to ensure that these measures are implemented.

The Council may refuse permission for developments where inadequate survey and mitigation details are included with an application.

For further information please visit the Natural England website: [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

## **D9. Building Control**

Most building works need to comply with Building Regulations even if planning permission is not required. Building Control is a statutory service that regulates the built environment through the Building Regulations securing the health, safety and welfare of persons in or about

buildings. This embraces the conservation of fuel, power and water as well as the welfare of disabled people. The Building Control service also controls demolition, and deals with dangerous structures and buildings. To ensure that your home will be safe and fit to live in you will need to ensure that your proposals meet appropriate Building Regulations. For further information please contact the Council's Building Control.

#### **D10. Legal Issues**

There are a range of other matters that can arise when seeking to improve your home. These include queries relating to land ownership, boundary disputes, party walls, rights of access, easements for utilities, covenants, rights of light and other such matters. These are legal, not planning, issues and will need to be resolved privately (i.e. not via Lancaster City Council). If you need to seek advice on such matters, you will need to contact a suitably qualified solicitor versed in such issues.

#### **D11. Demolition**

In some circumstances a proposed extension may involve demolition of an existing structure. For householder applications it is unlikely that the extent of demolition required to facilitate the proposal would be deemed as development in its own right. However, where the cubic volume of the structure to be demolished is more than 50m<sup>3</sup>, it should be included within the description of the development (e.g. demolition of an outbuilding and erection of a single storey side and rear extension).

Outbuildings within the curtilage of a Listed building are known as curtilage Listed structures and should only be demolished if Listed Building Consent is granted for such an action.

#### **D12. Joint Applications**

Where two neighbours, whose properties are joined, both wish to extend their houses, it is possible for both proposals to be submitted and considered as one planning application. Submitting a joint application with your neighbour can, in some circumstances, provide an opportunity for larger extensions to be built that would not normally be acceptable within the constraints set out in this advice.

Where a joint application is submitted (with the appropriate joint application fee), one of the neighbours would need to put their details forward as the applicant, and that applicant would need to serve the appropriate notice on their own neighbour and complete and submit Certificate B of the application form. The drawings should show the proposed extensions of both properties and the location plan should have a red line drawn around both properties.

Where a joint application is approved, a condition would normally be attached requiring both extensions to be built and completed at the same time. This would prevent the construction of one of the extensions where that extension would have an unacceptable impact on the neighbouring property in the absence of the other extension.

## APPENDICES

### APP1 Glossary of Terms

**Curtilage** – an enclosed area occupied by a dwelling, grounds, and outbuildings.

**Form** – the layout (structure and urban grain), density, scale (height and massing), appearance (materials and details) and landscape of development.

**Habitable rooms** – these include living rooms, principal dining rooms and bedrooms, but exclude kitchens, utility rooms, halls, landings, porches and bathrooms. However, kitchens may be considered habitable depending on their function.

**Massing** – this is the three dimensional expression of a development. It is the combined effect of the arrangement, volume and shape of a building, or part thereof. Occasionally the term “bulk” is used instead of the term “mass” in the context of buildings.

**Mullions** – the main vertical dividers on a window.

**Original dwelling** – refers to the house, as it existed on 1 July 1948, or if it was built after this date, to the house as it was built.

**Principal elevation** – in most cases, the principal elevation will be that part of the house which fronts (directly or at an angle) the main highway serving the house. It will usually contain the main architectural features such as main bay windows or a porch serving the main entrance to the house. Usually, but not exclusively, the principal elevation will be what is understood to be the front of the house.

**Principal window** – refers to windows that are the main source of light and outlook for a particular room. For large rooms, it may be considered that there is more than 1 principal window (e.g. where a room extends from the front to the back of the dwelling and where a window exists in both front and rear elevations).

**Residential amenity** – this refers specifically to the enjoyment by the user of a dwelling and its domestic curtilage. The impact of external factors on a user’s well-being is considerable when they affect his/her home and garden. New development should not significantly reduce privacy and light, which are important elements of residential amenity, nor be visually oppressive.

**Scale** – the impression of a building when seen in relation to its surroundings, or the size of parts of a building or its details, particularly as experienced in relation to the size of a person. Sometimes it is the total dimensions of a building which give it its sense of scale: at other times it is the size of the elements and the way they are combined.

**Setting** – the immediate surroundings of a building in terms of its natural and built environment. Principally landscape (including topography and planting) and the disposition and design of other buildings close by.

**Streetscene** – the disposition and design of buildings and the nature of spaces and planting together make up the character of the public realm. Although usually applied in urban areas, the term “streetscene” can also be used in relation to houses along a country lane. It would not, however, apply to small scale development in the open countryside.

**Supplementary Planning Document** – a local development document which provides additional advice and information relating to a specific policy or proposal in a Development Plan Document (DPD). It does not have DPD status and is not subject to independent examination.

**Transoms** – the main horizontal dividers on a window

## APP2 Useful Contacts and Links

Building Control Team	<a href="mailto:buildingcontrol@lancaster.gov.uk">buildingcontrol@lancaster.gov.uk</a>	01524 582950
Conservation Team	<a href="mailto:conservationteam@lancaster.gov.uk">conservationteam@lancaster.gov.uk</a>	01524 582535
Planning Admin Team	<a href="mailto:dm@lancaster.gov.uk">dm@lancaster.gov.uk</a>	01524 582950
Tree Officer	<a href="mailto:dm@lancaster.gov.uk">dm@lancaster.gov.uk</a>	01524 582950

The Commission for Architecture and the  
Built Environment (CABE)

[www.cabe.org](http://www.cabe.org)

English Heritage

[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

Environment Agency

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

Highway Authority (Lancashire County Council)

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

Lancashire Constabulary (Architectural Liaison)

[www.lancashire.police.uk](http://www.lancashire.police.uk)

Natural England

[www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

Planning Portal

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

Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)

[www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com)

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