

# Residential Extensions and Alterations

## Supplementary Guidance SG03

July 2015



**Falkirk Council**  
*Development Services*

# Supplementary Guidance

A suite of supplementary guidance (SGs) is currently being produced by the Council. Most of these SGs are updated versions of previous Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) whilst others cover new topic areas (\*denotes new SGs). There are 17 SGs in the series, all of which seek to provide more detailed guidance on how particular local development plan policies should be applied in practice.

These SGs form a statutory supplement to the Local Development Plan, and are intended to expand upon planning policies and proposals contained in the proposed plan.

A full list of the supplementary guidance available in this series is found below.

- SG01**    **Development in the Countryside \***
- SG02**    **Neighbourhood Design**
- SG03**    **Residential Extensions and Alterations**
- SG04**    **Shopfronts**
- SG05**    **Biodiversity and Development**
- SG06**    **Trees and Development**
- SG07**    **Frontiers of the Roman Empire (Antonine Wall) World Heritage Site**
- SG08**    **Local Nature Conservation and Geodiversity Sites \***
- SG09**    **Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Designations \***
- SG10**    **Education and New Housing Development**
- SG11**    **Healthcare and New Housing Development \***
- SG12**    **Affordable Housing**
- SG13**    **Open Space and New Development**
- SG14**    **Spatial Framework and Guidance for Wind Energy Development**
- SG15**    **Low and Zero Carbon Development \***
- SG16**    **Listed Buildings and Unlisted Properties in Conservation Areas \***
- SG17**    **Renewable Energy \***

# Residential Extensions and Alterations

## 1. Introduction



## 2. General Principles



## 3. Guidance for Different Types of Development



## 4. Checklist



## 5. Appendices



# 1. Introduction

## Who is this Guidance For?

- 1.1 This guidance is for anyone wishing to make a planning application in the Falkirk Council area for an extension or alteration to a residential building. The guidance does not apply to Listed Buildings or Conservation Areas where more strict controls apply.

## Purpose of Guidance

- 1.2 The guidance aims to raise the design quality of residential extensions and alterations, to the benefit of the wider built environment within the Falkirk Council area. Good design in the built environment creates places with an attractive character and has an impact on the economic well being and general quality of life of an area. Conversely, poorly considered extensions or alterations to dwellings can have an adverse impact on the quality of urban areas (Figure 1).

The guidance sets out the general principles which are considered important to achieving good design, and offers more detailed guidance on the most common forms of development. It is not intended to be an exhaustive document, and if a particular development type is not covered specifically by this guidance then applicants are advised to contact the Development Management Unit for further advice (please refer to Appendix 1 – Useful Contacts).

Figure 1a: Poor Design

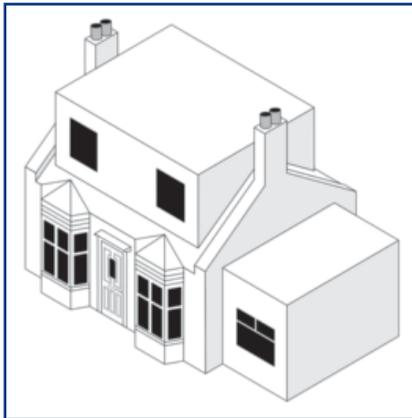


Figure 1b: Good Design



## Policy Context

- 1.3 This guidance has been produced by Falkirk Council to elaborate on Policy HSG07 House Extensions and Alterations contained in the Local Development Plan (LDP). It states:

### Policy HSG07 House Extension and Alterations

Extensions and alterations to houses will be permitted where:

1. The scale, design and materials are sympathetic to the existing building;
2. The location and scale of the extension or alterations will not significantly affect the degree of amenity, daylight or privacy enjoyed by neighbouring properties; and
3. It will not result in overdevelopment of the plot, thereby giving rise to adverse impacts on the functioning of garden ground, unacceptable loss of off-street parking, or road safety issues.

Proposals should comply with the detailed guidance on these criteria set out in the Supplementary Guidance SG03 'House Extensions and Alterations'

## Permitted Development Rights

- 1.4 Not all extensions and alterations to residential properties require planning permission. Some developments are deemed to be Permitted Development, which means that they can be carried out without the need for planning permission. However it should be noted that in certain circumstances, Permitted Development rights may have been removed. This applies for example to development in some Conservation Areas with an Article 4 Direction, alterations to Listed Buildings or as a result of conditions placed on a property or development by a previous planning permission.

If you wish to check if your proposal is permitted development you can complete the Council's online householder enquiry form which can be found on the Council's website: <http://falkirk.gov.uk/services/planning-building/development-management/planning-permission.aspx>



Further advice is also provided by 'Guidance on Householder Permitted Development Rights' which can be found on the Scottish Government website [www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0038/00388268.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0038/00388268.pdf)

# 1. Introduction

## Pre-application Advice

1.5 Pre-application advice is available from the Development Management Unit prior to the submission of a planning application. Applicants are encouraged to take advantage of this service. Some of the benefits include:

- Confirmation of whether the proposal constitutes Permitted Development or requires Planning Permission.
- Indication of whether or not a proposal may be acceptable, saving time, money and abortive work.
- Explaining which policies/guidance are likely to apply to your proposal.
- Helping to identify at an early stage if any specialist input is required (e.g. landscape/trees, ecology, conservation areas, listed buildings).

It should be noted that pre application advice is given without prejudice to the decision on any subsequent application, as further matters may arise during the processing of the planning application as result, for example, of consultation with agencies or notification of neighbours.



## What Permissions do I need?

1.6 In addition to planning permission, various permissions may be required for a residential extension or alteration such as:

### Listed Building Consent

Required where a building is listed by Historic Scotland as of special architectural or historic interest.

### Building Warrant

Required for most building works to ensure that they conform to the Building Regulations in terms of structural stability, weather resistance, sound and thermal insulation, fire protection, daylighting and drainage etc. A building warrant is no guarantee that planning permission will be granted.

### Tree Consent

Required where it is intended to remove or prune a tree located in a Conservation Area or an area protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).

## Consider Professional Design Advice

1.7 At the outset it is recommended that you seek professional advice from someone trained and experienced in designing buildings. The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland can give you a list of Architects (please refer to Appendix 1 - Useful Contacts).

## Protected Species

1.8 Bats and birds can be encountered when carrying out works to roofs and minor alterations or extensions. Some species are protected by law and to disturb them can constitute an offence. It is therefore recommended that an initial check is undertaken to identify if there are any issues which require further investigation. The presence of bats or birds is unlikely to mean that works cannot go ahead but does mean that their presence must be accommodated both during and after works. In these circumstances consultation with the Council or Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) is essential (please refer to Appendix 1 - Useful Contacts).

## 2. General Principles

### Understanding the Character of your Area

- 2.1 All extensions and alterations to existing buildings should relate well to the character and context of their surrounding area. Small developments can have significant impacts (Figure 2).

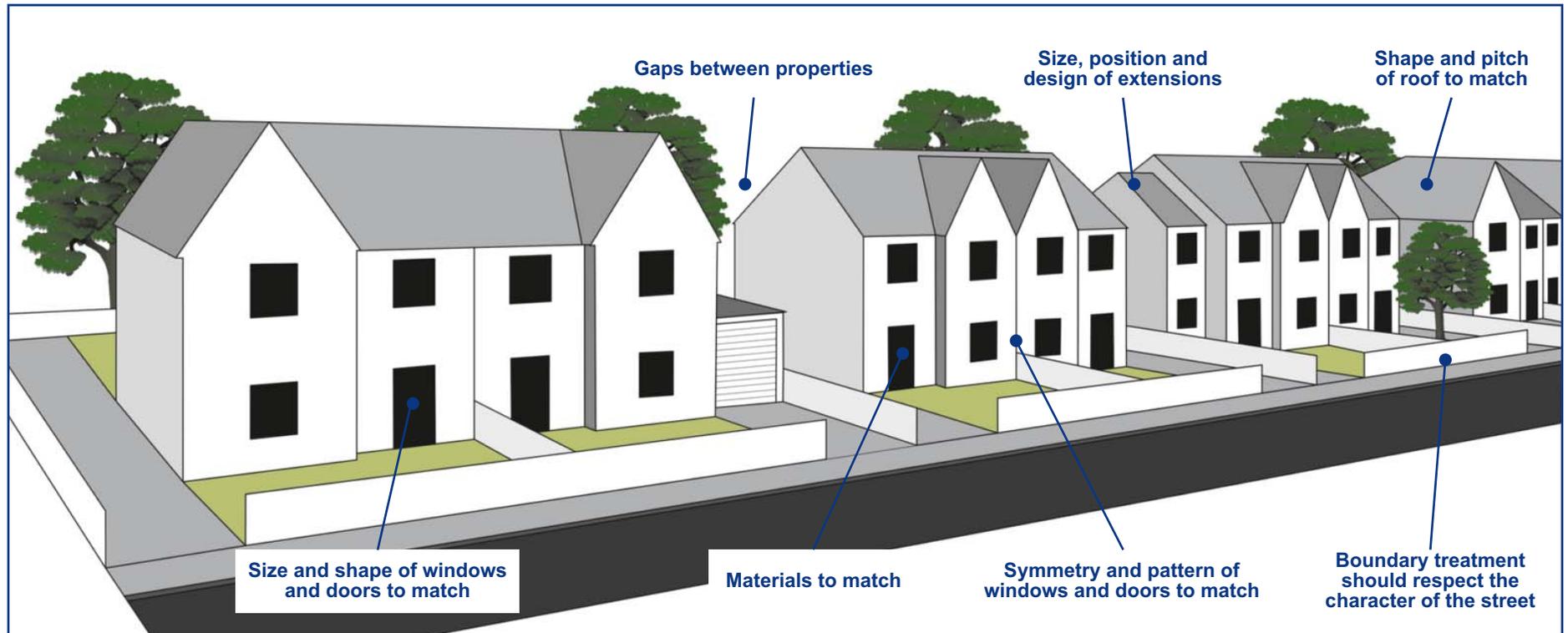
Where a residential extension or alteration is proposed, the external context should be examined as much as the internal relationships i.e. the form and style of the dwelling, the size, shape and landscape character of the garden ground, roads issues, the streetscape and your neighbours' amenity.

Residential alterations and extensions should be sympathetic to the dwelling and surroundings in terms of scale, positioning, detailing and materials to ensure that the development results in a balanced appearance and fits comfortably into the wider street scene, particularly if the neighbourhood has a well established style or character.

### Scale, Plot Size and Garden Ground

- 2.2 In terms of footprint and overall scale, proposed extensions should be proportionate in relation to the original dwelling and its plot. An extension should not dominate the original dwelling, or disrupt the established character of the street. Proposals should ensure that there is adequate usable garden ground remaining, having regard to the size of the original dwelling and prevailing garden sizes in the area. Applications will be assessed on a case by case basis, having regard to the character of the existing property, the space available around the property, the topography of the site, and the character and density of properties in the surrounding area.

Figure 2: Wider Context



## 2. General Principles

### Overshadowing and Loss of Light

- 2.3** Proposed extensions or alterations can have a negative effect on the amenity of adjacent properties as a result of overshadowing and a reduction in the amount of light. This will depend on the location, height and extent of the extension in relation to the existing windows in habitable rooms in the neighbouring house.

Where a potential overshadowing issue is identified by the Development Management Unit, applicants may be asked to supply a detailed daylighting assessment with calculations to demonstrate that their proposals are acceptable.

### Privacy and Overlooking

- 2.4** Loss of privacy is a further way in which extensions or alterations may adversely effect the amenity of neighbours. In assessing the impact of overlooking, the privacy of the occupants of the house is the principal consideration, although overlooking of garden space will also be taken into account. Assessments will take into account existing levels of overlooking and the general relationship of properties to one another. In denser urban areas, some degree of overlooking neighbouring properties is generally inevitable.

Applications will be assessed on a case by case basis, having regard to the following factors:

- Window to window distances;
- Angle of overlooking;
- Opportunities to mitigate impact (e.g. obscure glazed, fixed shut windows, high level);
- Use of affected room and use of proposed room (e.g. habitable or non habitable); and
- Differences in levels.

In general, the minimum distance between the windows to 'habitable' rooms directly facing each other should be 18m. However, this may be less when windows are off set, or angled in relation to one another (Figure 3 & Figure 4).

Habitable rooms include living rooms, dining rooms, bedrooms, studies and kitchens. They do not include hallways or bathrooms.

The loss of a view as a result of an extension is not a 'material consideration' in determining a planning application.

## 2. General Principles

Figure 3: Examples of Acceptable Window to Window Distances

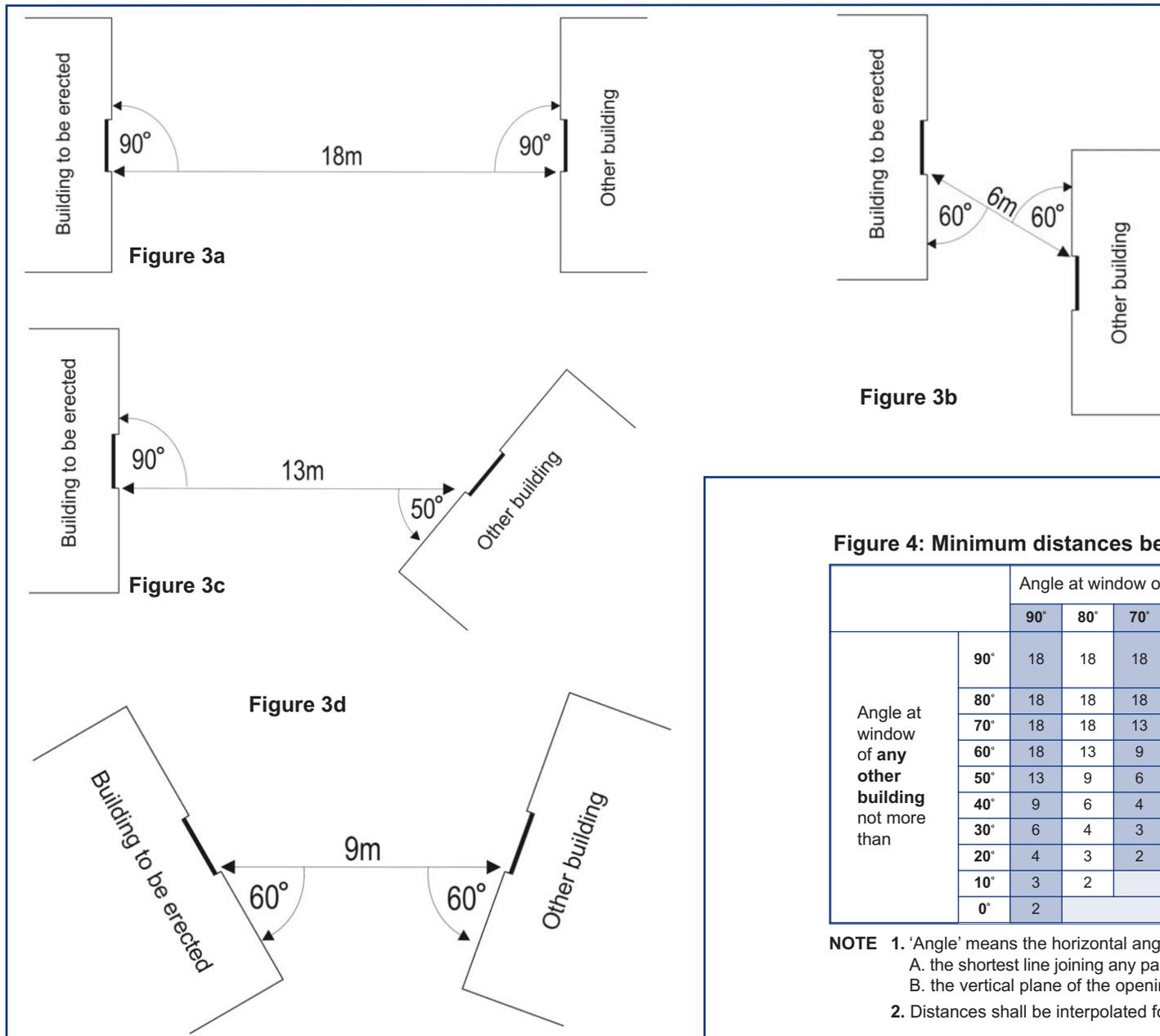


Figure 4: Minimum distances between window openings

		Angle at window of <b>building to be erected</b> not more than									
		90°	80°	70°	60°	50°	40°	30°	20°	10°	0°
Angle at window of <b>any other building</b> not more than	90°	18	18	18	18	13	9	6	4	3	2
	80°	18	18	18	13	9	6	4	3	2	
	70°	18	18	13	9	6	4	3	2		
	60°	18	13	9	6	4	3	2			
	50°	13	9	6	4	3	2				
	40°	9	6	4	3	2					
	30°	6	4	3	2						
	20°	4	3	2							
	10°	3	2								
	0°	2									

**NOTE** 1. 'Angle' means the horizontal angle included between :  
 A. the shortest line joining any part of one window opening to any part of the other  
 B. the vertical plane of the opening of the window  
 2. Distances shall be interpolated for intermediate angles

## 2. General Principles

### Roof Types and Design

2.5 The design of the roof of any extension is a major factor in successfully integrating the extension into the existing building. Attention should be paid to the appropriate type of roof profile and roof pitch (Figure 5).

**Hipped roofs** may be used in particular situations to create the impression of space between buildings but must always complement the street pattern.

**Lean-to or cat-slide roofs** which continue a pitched roof at the same or a shallower angle are generally acceptable.

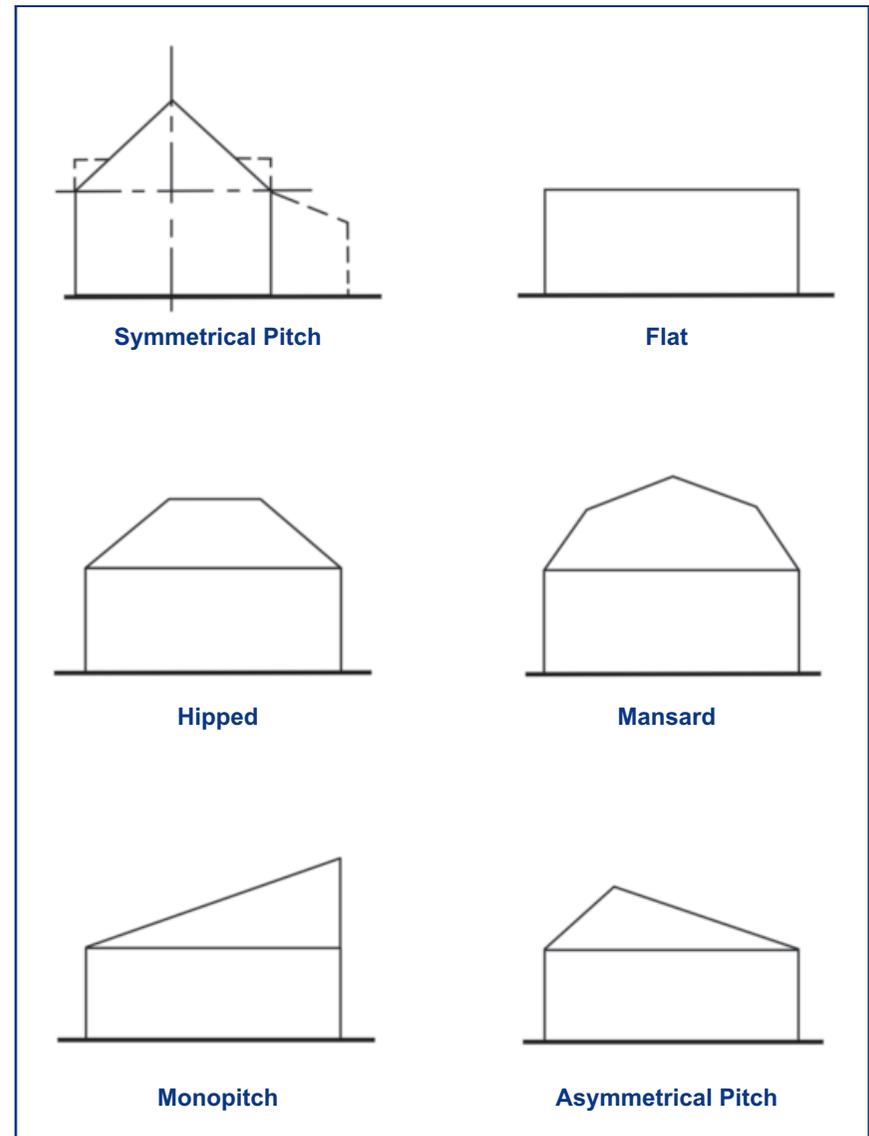
**Monopitch** roofs have an abrupt asymmetrical character and do not merge readily with traditional pitched roofs.

**Mansard roofs** have a heavy appearance and are rarely fit well into an established streetscape.

**Flat roofs** are generally only appropriate where they are :

- A characteristic feature of the original house;
- Concealed by pitched roofs or a parapet; or
- A relatively minor and incidental element to the rear of the property.

Figure 5: Roof Types



## 2. General Principles

### Materials

- 2.6** The external materials and detailing used in extensions and alterations should reflect and complement the existing house and be chosen with care to avoid harming the integrity of the original building. Generally either the same or compatible materials should be used. Proposed alterations should reflect the character of the original residential building in terms of material type, colour, texture, roof materials, window frames and doors. All materials on new development should complement the materials used on surrounding buildings (refer to Figure 6a & 6b).

It should be noted that the choice of materials may also be a condition of planning permission.

**Figure 6a:**  
Good Use of Materials & Design



**Figure 6b:**  
Poor Use of Materials & Design



### Access/Parking

- 2.7** Any loss of off street parking through a residential extension or alteration will be a consideration. This will be examined with reference to road safety considerations, vehicle parking and manoeuvring.

It should be noted that any access over the public footway will require Roads Construction Consent. Further advice can be obtained from the Councils Roads and Development Unit (please refer to Appendix 1 - Useful Contacts).

Hard surfacing in front gardens should always be constructed of permeable surfacing or only cover a small part of the front garden with water being directed to drain to the remaining lawn or flower beds area. (Figure 7) If the hard standing is to be enclosed with gates they should open inwards to prevent obstruction of the pavement/highway.

**Figure 7: Good Example of Front Garden Hard Surfacing**



### Special Circumstances

- 2.8** The Council recognises that extensions or alterations are sometimes required to ensure that a house meets disability needs or tolerable standards. In these circumstances, unavoidable departures from the general guidance in this SG will be treated sympathetically, provided there is an overall emphasis on good design.

### 3. Guidance for Different Types of Development

#### Front Extensions

- 3.1 Extensions to the front of a property can have a significant impact on the character of a neighbourhood. The 'building line' is the main plane of the building frontage along a street which excludes porches or bay windows on the original house. Any extension forward of the building line can have a significant impact on the appearance of the street. It is therefore important that proposals integrate with the existing house frontage and also into the street pattern. The scale and positioning of front extensions should be proportionate to the dwelling and maintain a balanced elevational composition.

The character of the street will be of particular importance in determining the appropriateness of front extensions. Where the street frontage has an established uniform style, e.g. terraced housing, front extensions will be carefully controlled to ensure that this uniformity is maintained. In less formal streets, where each house has its own distinct appearance, within its own plot, there will be more scope for flexibility.

Forward extensions should take into consideration impact on parking and access to the property (refer to Access/Parking section).

#### Side Extensions

- 3.2 In historic urban streets, where buildings butt up against each other naturally, it may be appropriate to infill gaps. However within more recent areas of detached and semi detached houses the spaces between the buildings help to create the character of the street (Figure 8).

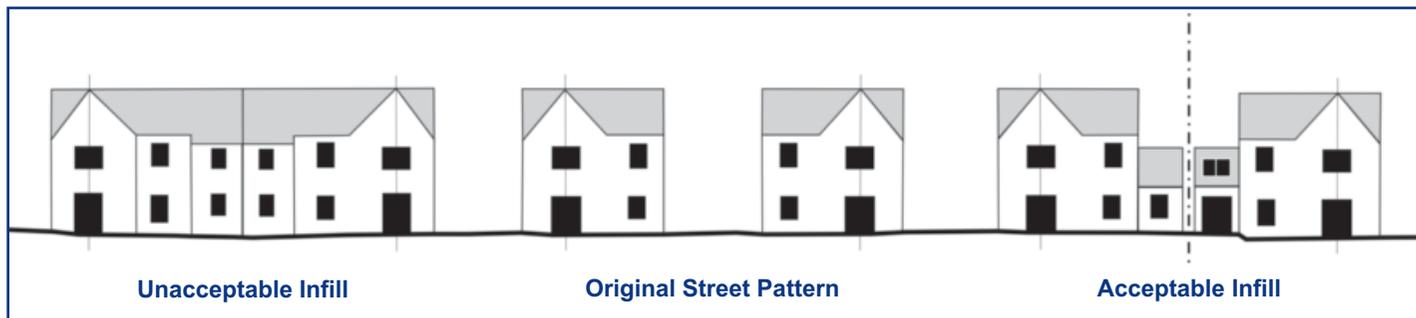
Applications for side extensions will be assessed on a case by case basis having regard to the following guidelines:

- Where a two storey side extension is proposed, integration with the existing house in terms of design and materials is particularly important.
- A side extension should generally have a distinct set back from the building line in order to achieve a satisfactory join of existing and new materials on the same plane, and reinforce the dominance of the original house. The amount of the set back should be related to the scale of the extension (Figure 9).

Side extensions should take into consideration impact on parking and access to the property (refer to Access/Parking section).

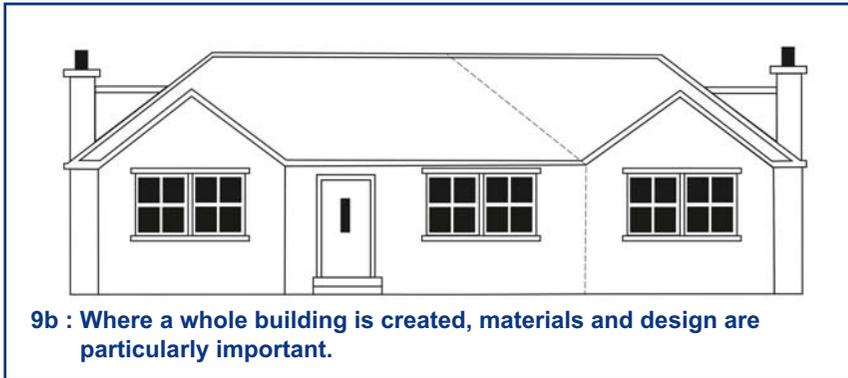
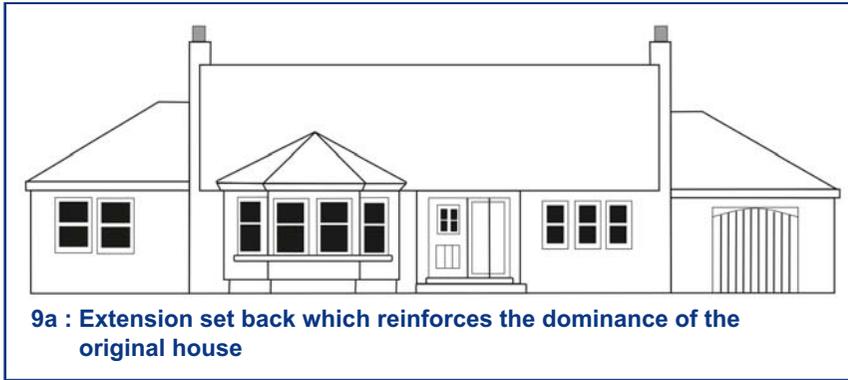
Applicants should consider the implications of any side extension for access between the front and the rear of the house (e.g. for refuse bins) and access for construction and maintenance.

Figure 8: Protecting Street Pattern



### 3. Guidance for Different Types of Development

Figure 9: Side Extension Examples



## 3. Guidance for Different Types of Development

### Rear Extensions

**3.3** Rear extensions are generally less visible than front or side extensions, so the main planning issues are more likely to be impact on garden size and amenity, privacy and daylighting. The following guidelines are applicable:

- Sufficient useable garden ground should be retained as part of the property. In assessing the adequacy of garden ground, average garden ground sizes in the area will be taken into account.
- Controls relating to overlooking and overshadowing set out in the General Principles section should be complied with.
- Extensions should not dominate or be out of scale with the existing house.

It should be noted that conservatories will be subject to the same considerations.



### Garages & Outbuildings

**3.4** Garages and outbuildings should not normally be in the front garden of domestic properties and should not be over dominant in relation to the existing and surrounding properties. The position of garages relative to the house should be informed by the character of the surrounding area.

All outbuildings must be smaller in scale and subservient to the house. Where possible the materials used for garages and outbuildings should be complementary the dwelling.

Impact on the useable amount of garden ground and on off-street parking will also be taken into consideration.



### 3. Guidance for Different Types of Development

#### Roof Extensions and Dormer Windows

3.5 A roof or dormer extension can be an appropriate means of extending upstairs floorspace (Figure 10). However, in many modern roof dormer extensions, too much accommodation has been sought, contained within overlarge boxes which are too bulky or out of proportion and spoil the character of the original house.

Where a dormer extension is proposed, therefore, the following standards will apply:

- Roof lights ('conservation' type to the front) and gable/end hip windows should be considered first.
- Proposals for the design of new or replacement dormers will be considered in relation to the house itself and to the streetscape.
- No new front dormers will be permitted on a uniform street presently without dormers. Where front dormers are, or have become, part of the character of the street, a traditional type dormer will be permitted
- Front box-dormers may be permitted where the street is characterised by a number of existing examples. The following guidelines are applicable:
  - Position should be below the roof ridge and set in from the gable or party wall.
  - A lightness of appearance, mainly glazed.
  - Vertically proportioned windows immediately over or related to the pattern of openings. The external cladding of the dormer should match that of the original roof, but should be kept to a minimum on the face of the dormer.



Figure 10: Dormer Window Types



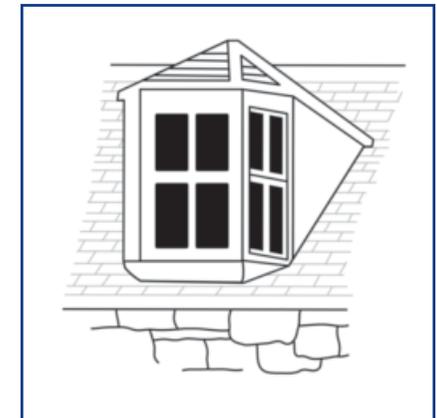
10a : Wallhead / 1<sup>3/4</sup> STOREY



10b : Wallhead



10c : Straight Gable



10d : Angled Bay / Hipped Roof

## 3. Guidance for Different Types of Development

### Boundary Treatments

**3.6** Boundary treatments, particularly front boundaries, have a significant impact on the character of an area and the street.

Their impact on daylight and sunlight of neighbouring properties needs to be considered. High fences, walls or hedges to the front or side of a property can be very stark additions which can harm the character of a street, and impact on visibility for vehicles.

In some circumstances rear boundaries may front onto a main road, so enhanced quality materials will be required to differentiate between public and private space. (see photos below of good and bad examples)



### Decks & Balconies

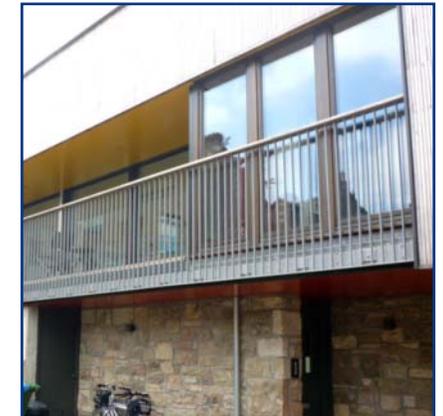
**3.7** All structures within the curtilage of a property need to respect the privacy and amenity of neighbouring properties.

Proposals will be assessed in terms of:

- Loss of privacy in neighbouring houses and gardens.
- Loss of character or amenity of the area.

This is particularly applicable to areas of decking if the structure is detached from the main building or raised. Decking should not dominate gardens or be easily viewed from public vantage points. It should be ideally set in from the boundary and where there is sufficient permanent screening, such as a high boundary wall or an outbuilding in an adjacent building.

Balconies raise potential problems such as overlooking and privacy, structural stability, overshadowing, noise, light spillage and security which require to be addressed.



## 3. Guidance for Different Types of Development

### Other Types of Development

- 3.8 This SG has not been exhaustive in the types of development covered (e.g. such as swimming pools, hot tubs, summer houses). If you are considering a proposed extension or alteration which is not covered by the guidance contained within this SG please approach the Development Management Unit for advice (contact details contained in Appendix 1).

## 4. Householder Design Checklist

- 4.1 Prior to submitting your planning application to the Council, please take time to check your proposal against the following points:

<b>Householder Design Checklist</b>	
Have you established whether your proposal needs planning permission? If so, have you sought pre-application advice from the Development Management Unit?	
Have you discussed the proposal with neighbours?	
Is your property a Listed Building or in a Conservation Area requiring specialist advice?	
Are there any implications for protected trees or protected species requiring specialist advice and separate consents?	
Does the design harmonise with the character of the property and surrounding street?	
Do the materials chosen complement the existing house?	
Does the design avoid harmful impact on your neighbours in terms of loss of light, overshadowing and privacy?	
Does the proposal maintain adequate provision of amenity open space?	
Do any changes to access and/or parking meet the Council's Road standards?	
Do your proposals require a separate Building Warrant Application to be submitted to the Council?	

## Appendix 1 - Useful Contacts

- 5.1 Information on Planning Permission, Permitted Development, Listed Building and Conservation Area control can be obtained from:

**Development Management Unit**

Development Services  
Falkirk Council  
Abbotsford House  
David's Loan  
Falkirk FK2 7YZ  
Tel: 01324 504748  
Email: [dc@falkirk.gov.uk](mailto:dc@falkirk.gov.uk)

Building Warrant information can be obtained from:

**Building Standards Unit**

Development Services  
Falkirk Council  
Abbotsford House  
David's Loan  
Falkirk  
FK2 7YZ  
Tel. 01324 504985  
Email: [buildingcontrol@falkirk.gov.uk](mailto:buildingcontrol@falkirk.gov.uk)

Information on Roads Construction Consent can be obtained from:

**Roads and Development**

Development Services  
Falkirk Council  
Abbotsford House  
David's Loan  
Falkirk  
FK2 7YZ  
Tel. 01324 504950  
Email: [roads@falkirk.gov.uk](mailto:roads@falkirk.gov.uk)

A list of architects and advice on employing a Chartered Architect can be obtained from:

**The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS)**

15 Rutland Square  
Edinburgh  
EH1 2BE  
Tel. 0131 229 7545  
Email: [info@rias.org.uk](mailto:info@rias.org.uk)  
Helpful information also available on the RIAS website: [www.rias.org.uk](http://www.rias.org.uk)

Information on protected species can be obtained from:

**Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)**

Forth Region  
Silvan House  
3rd Floor East  
231 Corstorphine Road  
Edinburgh  
EH12 7AT  
Tel 0131 316 2600  
Email: [forth@snh.gov.uk](mailto:forth@snh.gov.uk)



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