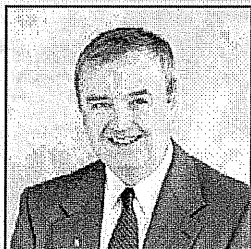


Foreword



David Alexander

Welcome to this supplementary planning guidance note on the design of House Extensions and Alterations. It is one of a suite of such guides promoting development quality in the built environment and taking forward the Council's commitment to sustainable development as set out in the Development Plan.

The aspiration of householders to extend a property in order to add accommodation is well appreciated. Good design will enhance the character of a house and the surrounding area and protect neighbouring amenity. This guide has been prepared to help householders and their agents to achieve the appropriate level of design quality acceptable to Falkirk Council.

The Council commends the advice set out in this guide.

May 2006

1. Introduction

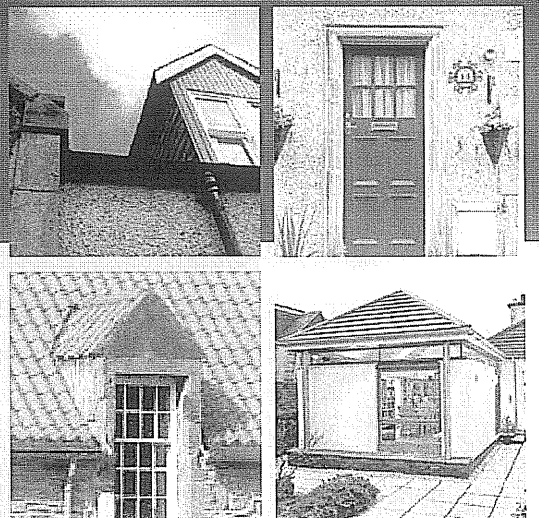
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Introduction

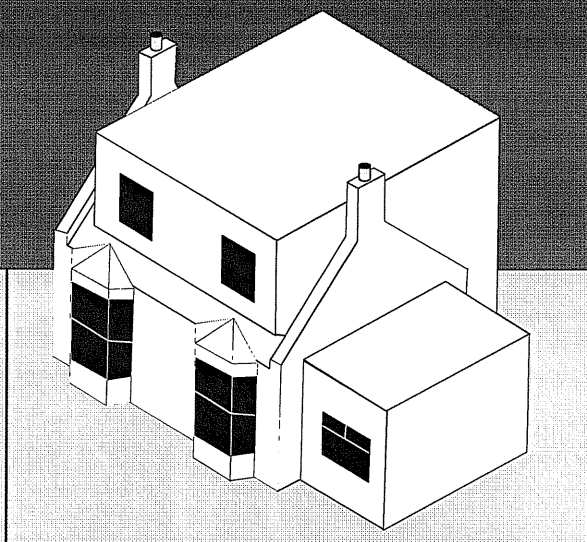


Figure 1a HOUSE EXTENSIONS - Poor

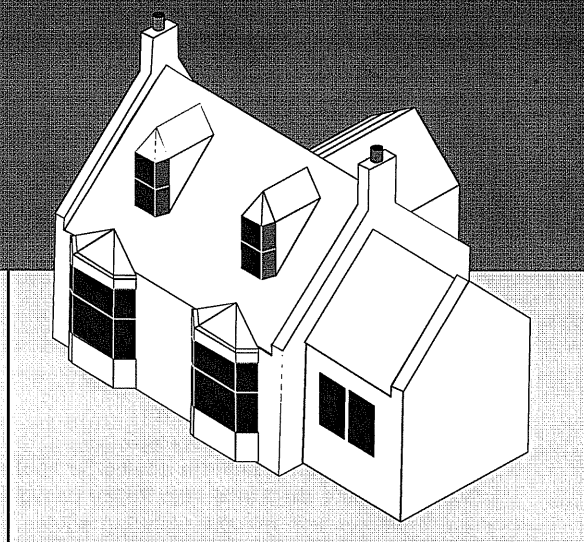


Figure 1b HOUSE EXTENSIONS - Good

1.1 What is the basic issue?

Good design in the built environment creates places with an attractive or picturesque character and has an impact on the economic well being and general quality of life of an area. It is now generally appreciated that poorly considered extensions or alterations to domestic properties can have an adverse impact on the quality of urban areas, contributing to a run-down appearance which, in the longer term, may even have an effect on property values and saleability.

Most people will find little difficulty in recognising a truly poor and intrusive design, e.g. an extension which visually dominates the original house and adversely affects the harmonious character of the street. However not as many are able to explain how good design is achieved. This Guidance Note has therefore been prepared to address the need for design advice in relation to house extensions. (Figure 1)

The advice provided should be applied in conjunction with the council's overarching **Supplementary Planning Guidance Note on Sustainable Design**.

1.2 Who is the guidance for?

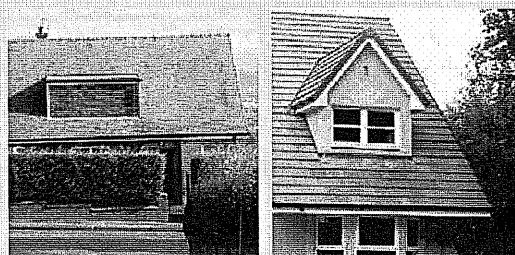
This Guidance Note is primarily intended to assist householders in making a planning application for a house extension to the council's design standards. It will also be useful for appraising a neighbouring development proposal.

1.3 Which areas are covered?

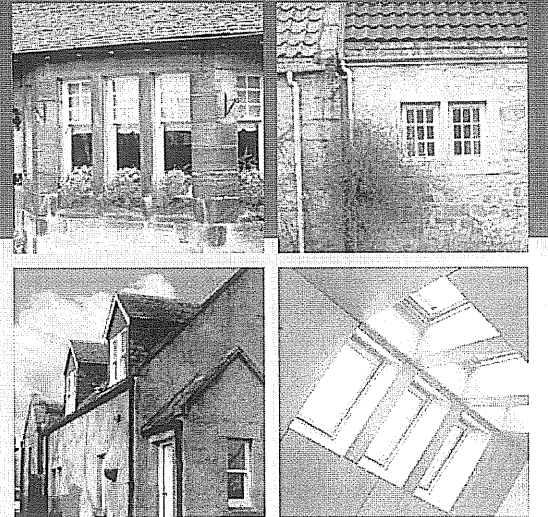
The primary locations addressed are the urban and suburban residential areas within the council area i.e., detached or semi-detached and terraced houses set formally alongside a public roadway. However the principles set down will also apply in general to more informally aligned dwellinghouses within more spacious plots and also to isolated rural developments.

1.4 How strictly will the advice be applied?

The Guidance Note sets out required standards as well as suggesting design options for achieving these. It will be applied generally but most strictly for Conservation Areas and other areas of townscape value and for Listed Buildings (where in certain instances no extension will be permitted). Elsewhere the principles set down may be less strictly applied as the context requires, e.g. where development is concealed from a public street to the rear, where the original character of an area has been almost entirely eroded, where a more stylised "modern" style pervades or where no distinct development pattern is apparent.



Poor Examples



1.5 What is the Local Plan Policy background?

**The Falkirk Council Local Plan
(Finalised Draft - March 2005):**

- ◆ actions the development of a series of Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes to improve Design Quality and Standards, this being one of them.
- ◆ sets out the legal basis for this advice note i.e. **Policy SC9 Extensions and Alterations to Residential Properties** which requires that such development has a sympathetic architectural character, ensures adequate privacy and garden size, and avoids overshadowing.

1.6 What general planning advice can be found pre- application?

When proposing to build an extension to a house the advice of the council's Development Control Officer for the local area should be sought for information on planning and other permissions, neighbour notification, fees, timescale and any further queries relating to this Guidance Note (**see Useful Contacts**). The submission of preliminary sketches would be useful to forestall any major redesign at a future date with its consequences for wasted time and money.

1.7 How can a suitable designer be engaged?

It is generally advisable to engage a qualified professional, preferably a chartered architect, to design and oversee the building work for the extension proposed (**see Useful Contacts**). Even when a proprietary type structure is proposed, e.g. a garage or conservatory, an architect is best able to determine its appropriateness to the house in terms of its physical character, impact on privacy, overshadowing and garden size.

1.8 Will the design requirements mean greater costs?

The design guidance aims generally to create simpler, discreet extensions next to the main house, avoiding over elaborate shapes, materials and details. This approach should, of itself, help to achieve a more economic design. It should also be appreciated that an architect is trained to achieve the most cost effective arrangement of the proposed accommodation overall and has a duty (of care) to recommend the lowest builder estimate.

Certain design features may initially be more costly but will create savings in the longer term e.g. pitched roofs may be more long lasting than flat roofs as well as offering additional accommodation.

Design Guidance

General Approach ■ Side and Forward Extensions

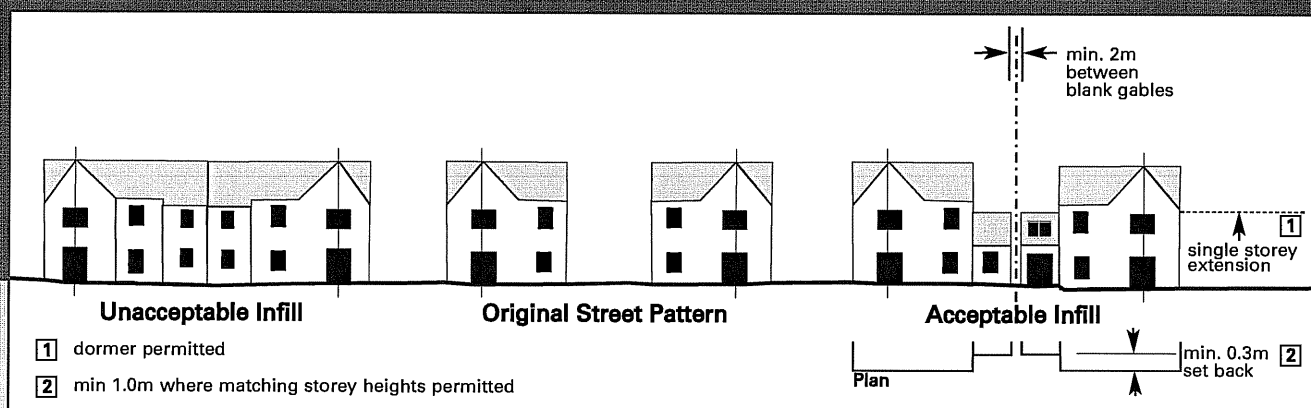


Figure 2: PROTECTING STREET PATTERN

2.1 General Approach

Where a house extension is proposed the external context should be examined as much as the internal relationships i.e. the form and style of the house, the size shape and landscape character of the garden ground, vehicle issues, the streetscape and the neighbour's amenity. Design guidance for this is set out as follows:

DIMENSIONAL information for :

- ◆ Side and Forward Extensions which mainly affect the streetscape pattern and public realm
- ◆ Rear Extensions which mainly affect garden size and amenity and the neighbour issues of privacy/overlooking and overshadowing

BUILDING DESIGN information for :

- ◆ Building and Roof Form and Elevational Composition
- ◆ External Finishes and Detailing (windows and doors)

The key terms "scale" and "character", noted in Local Plan policies, are interpreted in these paragraphs

DORMER EXTENSIONS

2.2 Side and Forward Extensions PUBLIC REALM/ STREETScape PATTERN

Side Extensions (Figure 2)

In historic urban streets, where buildings butt up against each other naturally, it is appropriate to infill gap sites. However within more recent areas of detached and semi detached houses the spaces between the buildings help to create the character of the street and should be protected as follows:

An extension must be no closer to the side boundary than 1.0 metre to ensure that:

- ◆ the extension can be constructed and its parts (e.g. down pipes) maintained in the future without encroaching on the neighbour's land or privacy.
- ◆ the access from the front to the back of the house is retained e.g. for refuse bin access.

Side extensions to 2 storey houses will generally be single storey. Discreet rooflights or dormers and hipped ends may allow this to rise to 1½ storeys where the pattern of space between the houses remains essentially undisturbed.

2 storey extensions are only permitted where they do not disturb the street pattern or are 4m. from any adjacent gable.

(see Rear Extension/Privacy and Overlooking)

Design Guidance

Side and Forward Extensions



Figure 3a SIDE EXTENSIONS General Rule : understated and set back



Figure 3b SIDE EXTENSIONS Exception : creates whole new building - re-roof and render

An extension should generally be set back by a minimum of 300 mm from the building line in order to:

- ◆ avoid an unsatisfactory join of existing and new materials on the same plane.
- ◆ reinforce the dominance of the original house by lowering the ridge line where the new roof pitch matches the existing and the extension does not extend beyond the rear face of the house. (Figure 3a)
(see **Building Form and Roof Types**)

Where an extension is the same storey height as the main house it should be set back by a minimum of 1.0m. A hipped end onto the side extension may be appropriate where the retention of the integrity of the original house is more important than street pattern and continuity.

These set back restrictions will not apply for large detached houses in landscape dominated plots where the extension becomes a complimentary part of the front elevation and the refurbishment of the whole house ensures a seamless joint of existing and new. (Figure 3b)