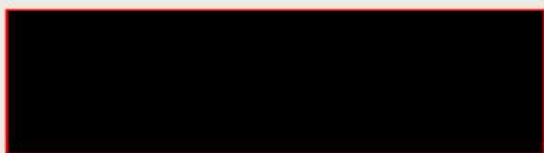


House Extensions & Alterations

Supplementary Planning Guidance Note





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



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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.



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 1 ½ 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)



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)

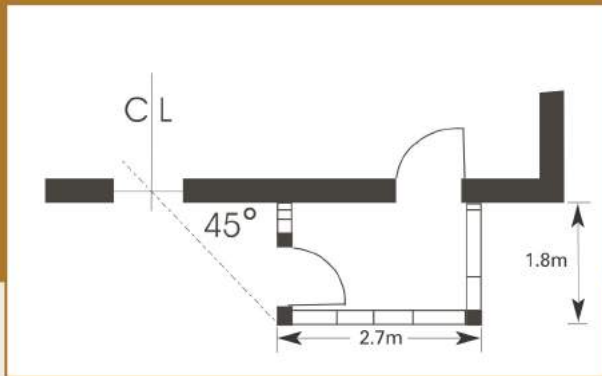


Figure 4a : PORCH - Max Dimensions

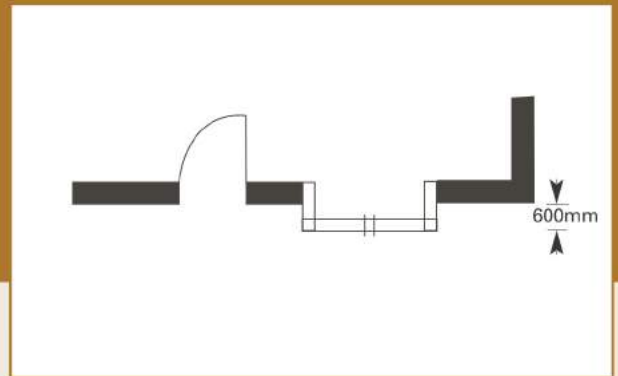


Figure 4b : BAY WINDOW - Rectangle preferred unless angle is a feature of street - Max Dimensions

Forward Extensions

The "building line" is the main plane of the building frontage which excludes porches or bay windows on the original house. Any extension forward of this should integrate into the existing house frontage and also into the street pattern. Planning Permission will be required and "individualising" of the elevation will be discouraged. Extensions will be permitted as follows:

Porch extension: projecting no more than 1.8 metres from the wall and no more than 2.7 metres wide.

Bay window: projecting no more than 600mm

A porch or bay window must be light and understated in character and mainly glazed below the roof. Unless an original feature of the house, angled bays will be considered less acceptable than the straight types and vertical proportioned window divisions will be preferred to horizontal. A uniform style will be required in the case of terrace and semi-detached housing. (Figures 4a & 4b)

The above constraints may be reduced where a house is within its own self contained plot and distinct in appearance from its neighbour or where, in a more uniform street scene, a precedent has been set which the proposal seeks to copy.

All front extensions must conform to the 45° rule (see **Rear Extension/Overshadowing**).

Garages and Pend Access

Roads standards require that curtilage parking be provided at the rate of one space for 2-bed (and less) houses and two for larger properties, in addition to any garage provision. Thus if a garage is proposed on a street frontage any loss of space for parking, access or turning vehicles must be relocated elsewhere within the garden ground. An open car port will count as a parking space as will a pend access below an extension at first floor where (i) it is a minimum of 3.5 metres wide to permit passenger exit and (ii) the planning permission includes a condition that the pend remain open front and back.

Access over the public footway will require Roads Construction Consent.

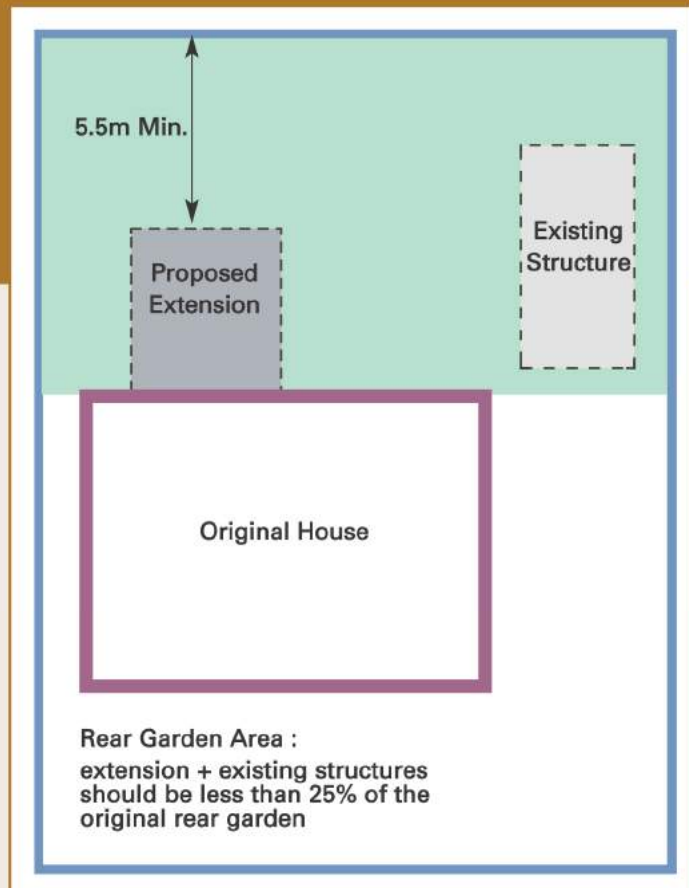


Figure 5 : RETAINING GARDEN GROUND



2.3 Rear Extensions NEIGHBOUR ISSUES

General

The concealed location of a rear extension means that the main planning concern is with garden amenity, privacy and internal daylighting. The following general points are made :

- ◆ A ground extension may be appropriate where an adequate garden size is retained and the option of a roof extension might result in visually intrusive dormers to the front.
(see **Roof Extensions and Dormer Windows**)
- ◆ Additional accommodation should not generally be greater than 50% of the existing ground floor area.
- ◆ Any extension should be lower, appear the same or of a smaller scale than the main house, and be set in from any side of it.
- ◆ The proportion of new solid walls to window openings should continue the existing pattern.

Usable Garden Ground

(Figure 5)

Controls relating to overlooking, overshadowing, and the proportional relationship of the extension to the original house will generally ensure that an adequate standard of enclosed private garden area is retained. However, as a general rule any rear extension:

- ◆ together with existing sheds and garages, should not exceed 25% of the original enclosed garden to the rear of the building line.
- ◆ should not encroach beyond 5.5 metres of the rear garden boundary.

Concessions on these standards would be considered where the extension:

- ◆ creates a garden size no less than is the average in the particular area.
- ◆ is required to meet tolerable standards or disability needs.

Minimum distances between window openings

		Angle at window of building to be erected not more than									
		90°	80°	70°	60°	50°	40°	30°	20°	10°	0°
Angle at window of any other building 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

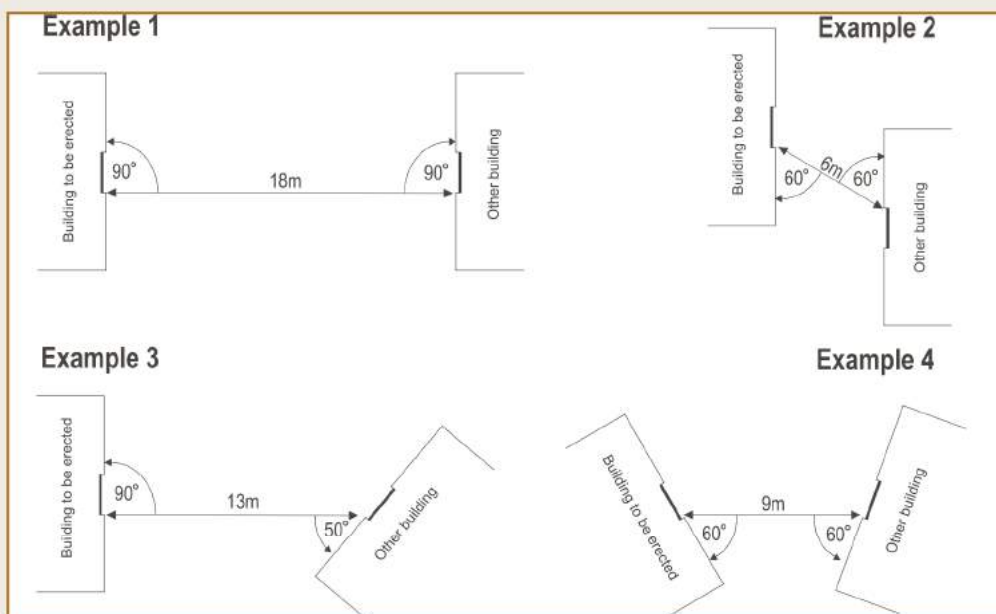


Figure 6 : PRIVACY AND OVERLOOKING
window to window distances

Privacy and Overlooking (Figure 6)

In establishing measures to prevent overlooking, the privacy of the house is considered of greater importance than that of the garden. The guidelines are:

- ◆ The minimum distance between the windows to "habitable" *rooms and/or conservatories directly facing each other should be 18 metres.
- ◆ This dimension may be reduced where
 - (i) windows do not directly face each other
 - (ii) windows are at an angle to each other
 - (iii) there is effective permanent screening e.g. a 2 metre high wall or fence defines the mutual boundary.

- ◆ Where an extension is 1 ½ or 2 storey there should not be any side windows to "habitable" rooms to avoid a precedent which may be the cause of neighbour dispute. Windows on the rear frontage or in roof light form could be considered instead.
- ◆ Non-habitable room windows will be encouraged on side elevations to avoid blank walls e.g. bathrooms with opaque glass.

* living rooms and bedrooms

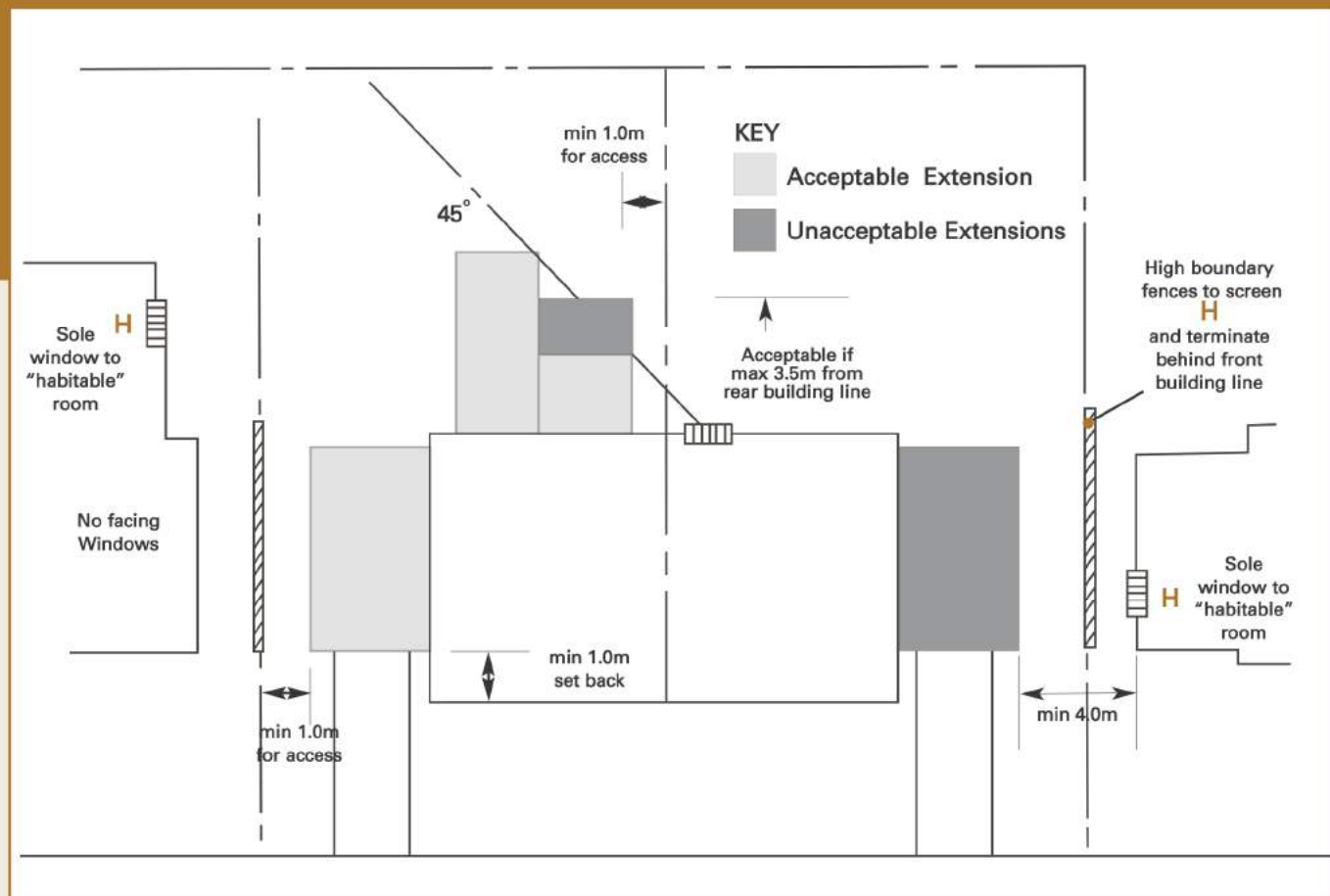


Figure 7 : OVERSHADOWING
dimensional criteria for 1½ to 2-storey extension

Overshadowing (Figure 7)

Screen fences and structures resulting from "permitted development" and casting a shadow across the face of a neighbour's window or garden ground cannot be avoided. Therefore advice only applies to a 1½ or 2 storey extension i.e. it should not project from the rear building line beyond either:

- ◆ a line drawn at a 45° from the midpoint of the nearest ground floor window of the adjoining house, on the rear building line or
- ◆ a maximum of 3.5 metres from the rear building line of the house

whichever allows the greatest development.

Where in semi-detached house an existing extension already projects beyond the limits set above, a matching extension in the adjoining house will be accepted.

Any extension whose side faces onto a neighbouring house immediately opposite the only window to a habitable room must be no closer than 4 metres.

It should be noted that the loss of a view or outlook as a result of an extension is not generally deemed a material consideration in determining a planning application.

A 1.8 m. high fence may extend along a side boundary to conceal a window on a gable but should not continue towards the roadway at a height greater than 1.0 m. clear of the building line.

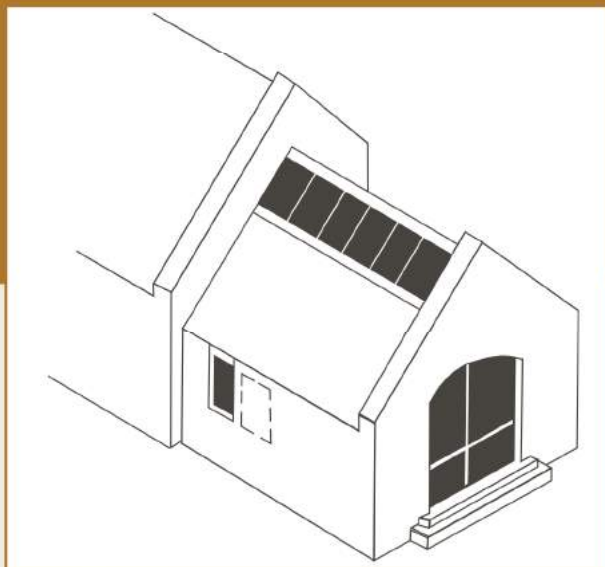


Figure 8 : SUNLIT ROOM - alternative to conservatory

Conservatories

All-glazed conservatory extensions are a traditional means of linking house to garden. Issues to be considered are:

- ◆ **Amenity and Privacy:** a solid wall or obscure glazing may be necessary for privacy and a sunlit room might be an appropriate alternative, being more shaded, cooler in summer and warmer in winter. (Figure 8)
- ◆ **Shape:** over ornate shapes and details are to be avoided unless the character of the main house demands it.



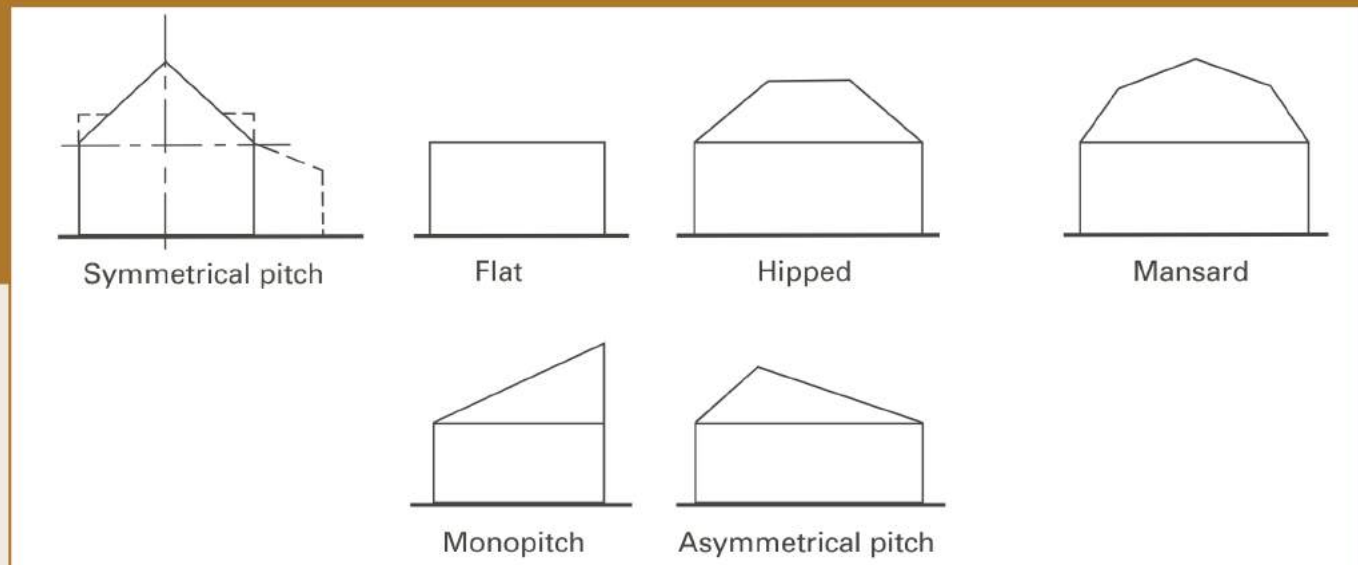


Figure 9 : ROOF TYPES

2.4 Building Form and Roof Types (Figure 9)

Roof form determines the appropriate building form. In order to be in scale with the existing house the roof pitch of an extension should exactly match that of any gable to which it abuts. Where at right angles there should at least be a close match of pitch. If a frontage is altered to add a gable feature this should generally be no less than 45° .

A **hipped roof** may be used in particular situations to create the impression of space between buildings but must always complement the street pattern. It was used traditionally to terminate an extension to the rear (or to the side in a larger plot) disguising the poor visual impact of a lower pitched roof.

Lean-to or cat-slide roofs which continue a pitched roof, at the same or a shallower angle, are acceptable. (Figure 10)
Additional accommodation is made possible where this roof type creates an internal corner infill to a steeper pitched gabled extension to the rear. (Figure 11)
A lean-to roof from a gable end may also be acceptable.

Monopitch roofs have an abrupt, asymmetrical character and do not merge well with traditional pitched roofs. They may be acceptable where symmetry is recreated in groups of 2 or where a monopitch is already a feature of the main house.

Mansard roofs are only acceptable to the rear where an upward extension requires to retain the impression of a single storey building. (see Roof Extensions and Dormer Windows)

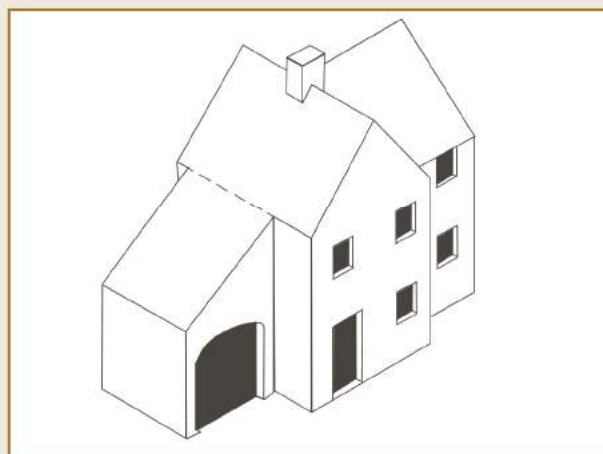


Figure 10 : CAT-SLIDE ROOF - extends modern house

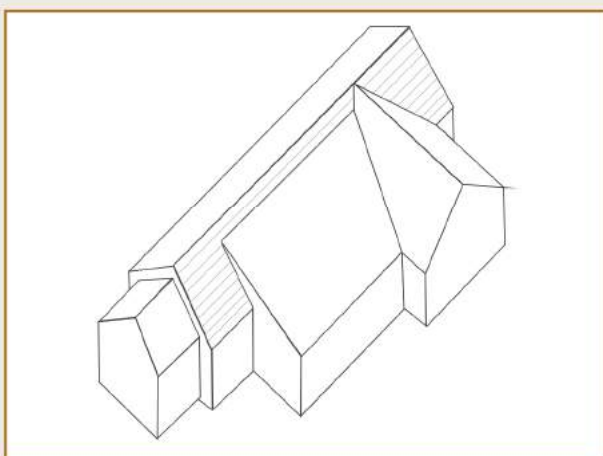


Figure 11 : CONTINUITY OF SCALE
Side : reduced size & matching roof pitch
Rear : cat-slide infill absorbs additional accommodation