

DESIGN GUIDANCE NOTE NO: 5  
EXTENSIONS TO HOUSES



This note is one of a series providing design guidance for development in the borough. It explains the criteria used by the council to decide planning applications for extensions to houses. The guidance supplements the policies in the borough's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) which was adopted in November 1991 and the revision (draft) UDP adopted for development control purposes in April 2001. These policies are designed to conserve and enhance the environmental quality of the borough and provide a context within which applications for extensions to houses can be determined.

The leaflet suggests principles of good design which should be borne in mind whether or not planning permission is required. It is not intended to inhibit imaginative or sensitive designs, but to offer general advice on the solutions that have been found to be acceptable.

When applications for planning permission are considered the council will look to see how proposals accord with the guidelines included in this note. The guidelines represent an important material consideration that will be taken into account within the determination of applications.

**Avoiding disputes with your Neighbours**

You may have firm ideas about how you want to change your house but do you know what your neighbours think? They are likely to be consulted on any planning application you make and this type of official consultation letter, which will not include details of what you propose, may be very worrying for them. Such uncertainty can lead to objections and disagreements. To help avoid this, and as a common courtesy, it is always a good idea to discuss your ideas with your neighbours at an early stage. If you can, show them the plans, explain the size of your extension, what it will look like and where you want windows. If you are building close to a boundary discuss any effect on guttering, the extent of foundations or access you may need for building and maintenance. Where party walls are affected you may need to appoint a party wall surveyor. It may even be an idea to mark out the size and position of your extension to give an indication of how it will look.

## **BARNET'S CHARACTER**

Large areas of Barnet are characterised by relatively low density suburban housing with an attractive mixture of semi-detached and detached houses. In many streets a major part of the character is derived from the well-balanced and pleasant view of a group of houses, built by one housebuilder at the same time, often of similar style and size and form. In addition there are a number of localities and neighbourhoods which have their own special character deriving in part from the design, type and size of dwelling, and the materials used. The council is committed to protecting, and where possible enhancing the character of the borough's residential areas and retaining an attractive street scene.

Against this must be set the natural desire of owners to improve and extend their properties. Extensions to houses, both individually and cumulatively can have a profound effect on the appearance of neighbourhoods and of the street scene and on the amenities enjoyed by the occupiers of adjoining properties.

## **CONSERVATION AREAS**

There are areas in the borough of special architectural or historic interest. These areas have been designated Conservation Areas by the local authority because of their particular character. To preserve or enhance the special character and appearance of these areas the council may require a higher standard of design and materials than specified in this guidance note.

Separate design notes and Conservation Area Character Appraisal statements are available for many of the borough's Conservation Areas.

## Part 1 - Principles of good design

In general, extensions should reflect the design of the original building, have regard to the character of the area and amenity enjoyed by your neighbours. This means making sure your extension does not disrupt your neighbours' enjoyment of their own home, garden or neighbourhood.

It is important to note that not all houses can be extended. In some cases there will not be enough space, or their position or design will mean any extension would harm the street scene or local amenity.

In addition there is a limit to the amount of extension most houses can accommodate. The cumulative effect of additions will be taken into account. This means that extensions, which meet all the guidelines included in this note, may still be unacceptable.

### 1. AMENITY

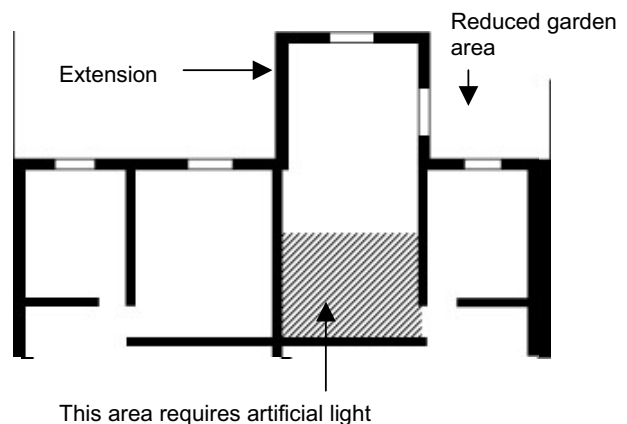
1.1 Extensions should not be overbearing or unduly obtrusive and care should be taken to ensure that they do not result in harmful:

- Loss of privacy by overlooking adjoining properties.
- Loss of light or overshadowing of adjoining properties, particularly loss of light to main windows serving principal rooms such as living or dining rooms.
- Loss of outlook from adjoining properties.
- Loss of parking space
- Loss of garden, landscaping or open space which contributes to local amenity
- Overbearing/sense of enclosure to adjoining properties



**Fig 1. Overshadowing, overlooking and loss of outlook**

1.2 Also bear in mind that an extension at the rear of your property may affect your own amenities by reducing your garden size or restricting natural light to your own existing rooms, so you will need to use artificial light for much of the day. (see fig 2)



**Fig 2. Reduced garden area/loss of light**

## 2. HARMONY

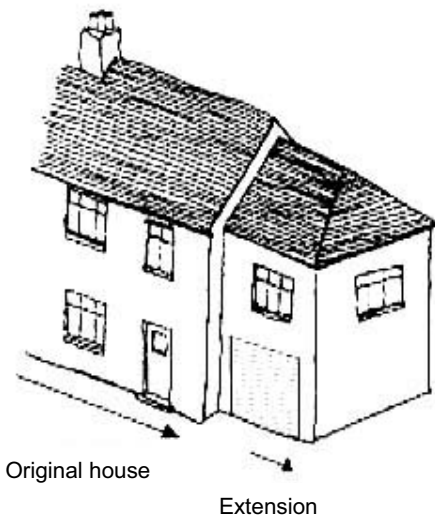
2.1 Proposed extensions should be consistent in terms of the form, scale and architectural style with the original building and area. This can be achieved by:

- Respecting the proportions of the existing house.
- Using an appropriate roof form.
- Matching materials and details.
- Matching window style and position
- Reflecting the character of the original house

2.2 Whichever type of design is proposed,

- The extension should always be subordinate to the original house.
- The extension should be in proportion both in its own right and in relation to the original building.
- The height of the extension should normally be lower than the height of the original building.

For example this can usually be achieved for a two-storey side extension by stepping down the roofline and setting back the front building line.

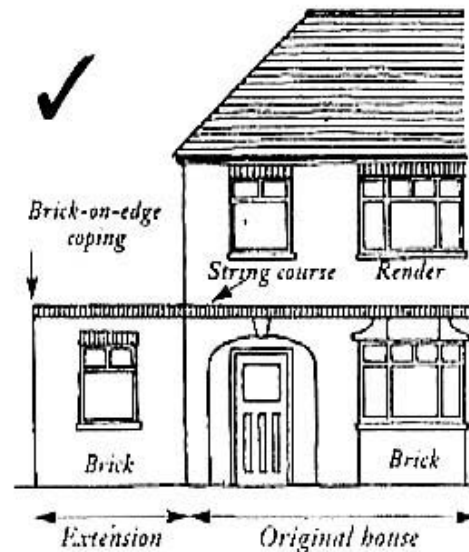


**Fig 3. Extension set back and in, below height of ridge.**

## 3. MATERIALS AND DETAILS

3.1 External finishes, materials and architectural features will affect how your extension looks. Match the brick colour/type and the mortar joints to those of the existing house. The design, proportions and position of joinery details, windows and doors should reflect those of the original building.

3.2 Any vertical or horizontal emphasis or hierarchy of windows should be followed. This normally means that windows should get smaller the higher up the house they are. For example: Where a flat roof is appropriate on a single storey extension the roof should relate to original horizontal elements such as canopies, string courses, or to the line of change between materials e.g. brick to render or tile hanging. Brick on edge coping is usually more satisfactory than a timber fascia board (see fig. 5). The roofline of the extension should generally follow through or be lower than the original.



**Fig 5. Matching materials and detailing**

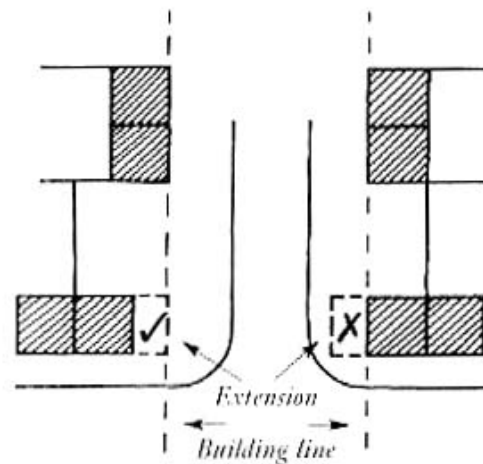
## 4. FITTING INTO THE STREET

4.1 Your extension should sit well in the street as a whole. Follow these pointers to help ensure your extension is acceptable:

- Take account of the group value, character and established form of development along your street;
- Use designs and materials which blend in with the character and design of existing and neighbouring houses;
- Take account of changes in levels between properties and gardens;
- Do not protrude past prominent building lines on corners;
- Leave enough space between houses to make sure they appear well separated;
- Protect important glimpsed views between buildings which allow greenery to be seen from the road;
- Take account of existing features along the boundary, for example, outbuildings, fences, walls and trees;
- Make sure the garden you end up with is not too small for your own enjoyment;
- Roofs should be finished in a manner that complements the roof form of the original house and the surrounding area; and
- Take account of the angle and position of your house. This may increase the effect of your extension on the streetscene.



**Fig 6. Protect glimpsed views between buildings that allow greenery to be seen**



**Fig 7. Do not protrude past prominent corners**

## Part 2 - Design Guidelines

### 1. SIDE EXTENSIONS

1.1 Side extensions to existing buildings can be unacceptably prominent features in the street scene.

Extensions on corner sites will be particularly open to public view. First floor extensions on corner sites should not project beyond the building line of the adjoining road (see fig 7).

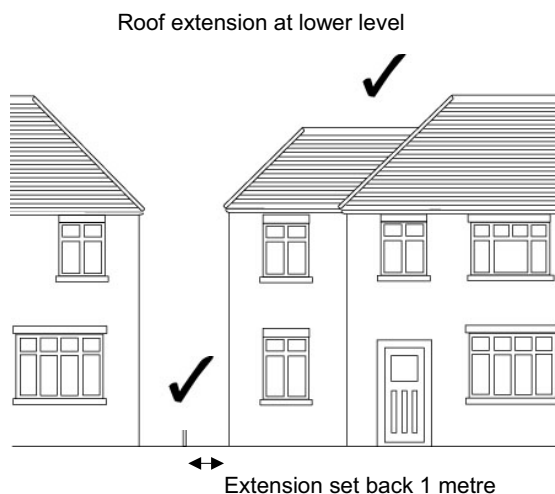
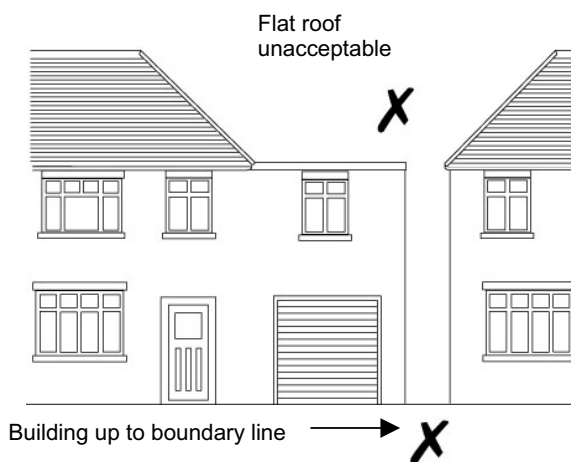
Pitched roofs help highly visible extensions fit in with the street and may be required for single storey extensions. Pitched roofs, following the same pitch as the existing roof, will always be needed for two storey extensions. Side windows or other detailing can also help improve the appearance of a flank wall.

1.2 In order to reduce the impact of two storey or first floor side extensions, there should be a gap of at least 2m between the flank walls of properties at first floor level and a minimum gap of 1m between the boundary and the extension at first floor level. A larger gap may be required if the adjoining property would in any way be demonstrably harmed or where the gap between properties forms an important part of the character of the area.

1.3 In addition, a lower roof and the setting back of the front wall of all side extensions by at least 1m from the front building line can help to minimize the impact on the street scene.

1.4 Where possible an existing direct access to a rear garden should be retained.

**Figs. 8 & 9 Two storey side extensions**



## 2. REAR EXTENSIONS

2.1 Single storey rear extensions to the original house projecting up to a maximum of 3 metres in depth along the boundary with a property will normally be acceptable. However 3m rear extensions are sometimes too deep where:

- Houses are already 'stepped' and sit forward of their neighbours;
- There are significant changes in levels; or
- They would look too bulky and prominent compared to the size of houses and gardens to which they relate.

2.2 Two storey rear extensions are not normally acceptable on terraced or closely spaced semi-detached or detached houses. This is because of their effect on the amenities of neighbours such as:

- loss of light and outlook because windows and doors are so close to the extension.
- unacceptable sense of enclosure to house and garden.
- Overbearing

In some cases single storey rear extensions on neighbouring properties may reduce this effect but the extension may still be:

- out of character with the existing form of the surrounding properties.
- The bulk of extension may look inappropriate from surrounding gardens

2.3 On detached or widely spaced semi-detached houses there may be more room for rear extensions. However the principles listed in Part 1 still apply.

2.4 Flat roofs should not be used as balconies as loss of privacy almost always results. This applies to side as well as rear extensions.

2.5 Raised patios can also have a marked effect on neighbours. In some cases they need planning permission and care should be taken that they do not result in loss of privacy or outlook for neighbours.

## 3. FRONT EXTENSIONS

3.1 Large front extensions will not normally be permitted because of their effect on the street scene and character of the area in general.

3.2 Where it is considered that a building may reasonably be extended forward (for example on detached houses in low density areas or in roads with irregular building lines), the following principles should be observed:

- The new roof should reflect the roof form of the existing house.
- Care should be taken to ensure that front extensions have regard to and do not conflict with existing architectural features such as bay windows.
- Front extensions should fit in with the architectural style of the house or surrounding group of houses.
- Windows should be positioned where they do not have a harmful affect on the amenities of neighbouring properties.



Fig. 10 Examples of front extensions

## 4. ROOF EXTENSIONS

Further usable space may be created by converting the roof space, often involving the formation of dormer windows or rooflights. You should not automatically assume you would be able to extend into your roof - many houses in the borough have roofs which are too small for conversion or in some cases dormer windows may be out of keeping with the character of an area.

### 4.1 Dormer Windows

A dormer window is a vertical window or opening in a sloping roof, having its own roof, either flat, pitched or curved.

Dormer windows can have a significant effect on the appearance of a house and their design needs careful consideration. They should be used to provide light to existing spaces or create headroom over new stairs.

Dormers on the front of semi-detached or terraced houses will not generally be acceptable due to their unbalancing effect on adjoining houses and the general streetscene.

The following points should be considered for dormer windows:

- **Design** - The design of dormer windows should reflect the style, proportion and rhythm of the existing house. They may have flat, gabled, hipped or curved roofs and subject to the criteria on position, should wherever possible be in line with the windows below.

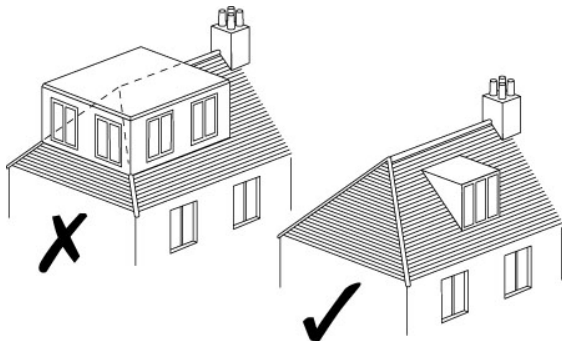


Fig.11 Size and scale of dormer windows

- **Proportion**. To retain the balance of your house, the window and the dormer frame to each side of the window (including dormer cheeks), should be smaller than the window below it.
- **Overlooking** - care should be taken in the design and location of new dormers to minimize overlooking of adjoining properties.
- **Position** - Dormer windows should not overlap or wrap around the hips or rise above the ridge. They should leave some roof slope above and below the dormer and on semi-detached and terraced properties should be set in approximately 1m from the party wall, flank wall or chimney stack.

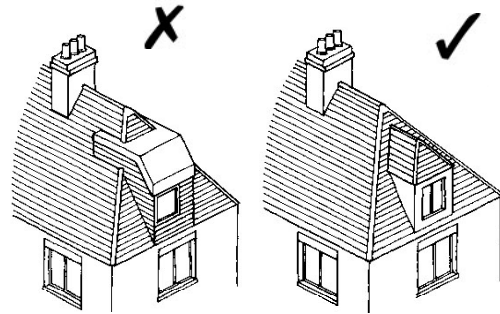
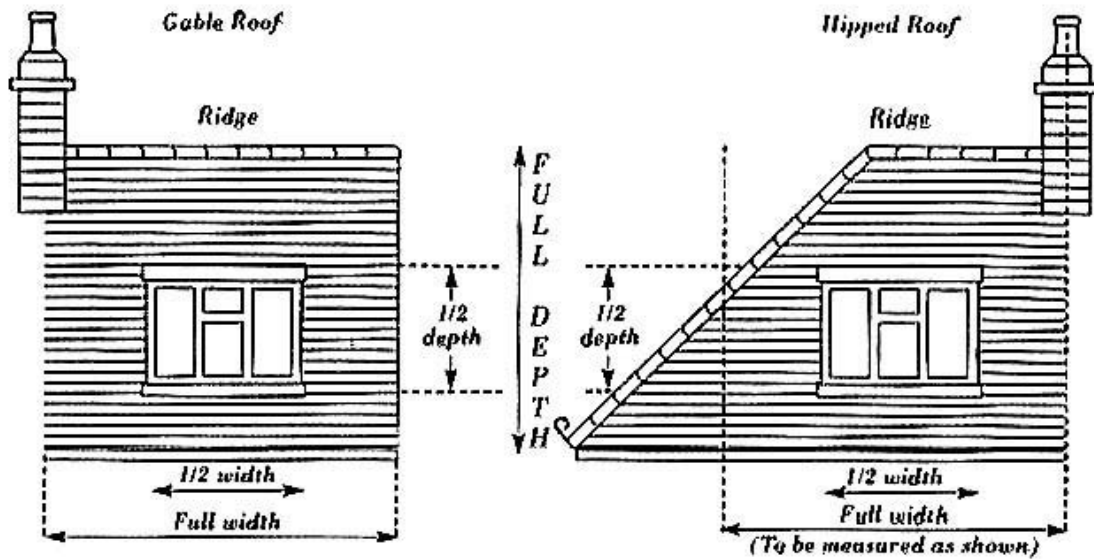


Fig. 12 Relationship to existing roof

- **Materials** - The materials used should match the existing roof as far as possible. The dormer cheeks should be finished with lead, tiles or slates or other traditional materials, and the top of flat roofed dormers with lead or zinc in preference to roofing felt. The use of roofing felt for the cheeks or face of the dormer should be avoided. The window materials and design should be in keeping with the rest of the house.



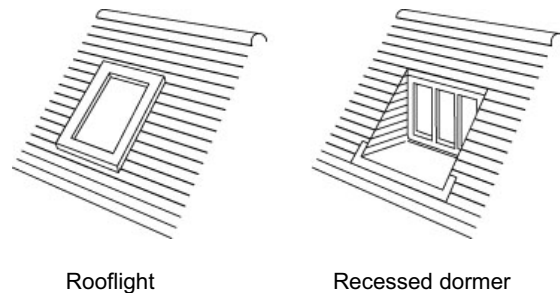


**Fig 13. Rear dormer windows**

- **Scale**- Generally, dormers should be subordinate features in the roof and should not occupy more than half the width or depth of the roof slope. On an average semi-detached house a flat roofed rear dormer would be about 2m long by 1.5m high. The diagram above explains this.
- **Roofs** - Dormer roofs should be in harmony with your roof and any adjacent roofs. For example: Roofs to dormers should be hipped at the same angle as the main roof (fig 12).

- The gable would not be out of character with the streetscape
- New windows in gable end do not result in loss of privacy

**4.3 Alternatives** - Where a conventional dormer cannot be used, a recessed dormer or rooflight may represent an alternative solution



#### 4.2 Whole Roof Extensions

In exceptional circumstances it is sometimes possible to extend the whole of your roof from a hip to a gable. However this will only be appropriate where:

- The group value of an estate or adjacent houses will not be eroded.
- The gable would not unbalance a pair of semi-detached houses or a short terrace.
- The gable would not reduce the degree of visual separation between houses or glimpsed views from the street.
- The gable would not form an overbearing wall facing a street, neighbouring garden or other public place.

**Fig. 14 Alternatives to dormer windows**

## 5. DETACHED BUILDINGS IN BACK AND FRONT GARDENS

Detached buildings can have a significant impact on local character and amenity.

### 5.1 Back Gardens.

In general similar principles apply to their size, location and design as to rear extensions.

- they should not unduly over shadow neighbouring properties
- they should not be too large or significantly reduce the size of a garden to become out of character with the area,
- they should not unduly affect outlook from an adjoining property's habitable rooms or principal garden areas.
- their design and materials should be in harmony with the surrounding area.

### 5.2 Front Gardens

Detached buildings are not normally acceptable at the front of terraced or semi detached houses because of their dominant impact on the streetscene.

On detached houses they would only be acceptable where detached buildings in front gardens form part of the existing character of the street. For instance where detached buildings were built as part of the original form and layout of an estate.

## BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF EXTENSION:

These rules should be read in conjunction with detailed guidelines set out in Part 2 of this document.

- **Single storey side extensions** - may be acceptable subject to their impact on neighbouring properties, the existing house and the street scene.
- **Two storey side extensions** - usually need to be set back and down from the original house and ridge. Flat roofs will not be acceptable on 2 storey extensions and in most cases they would be refused planning permission. Pitched roofs

following the slope of the original roof will normally be most appropriate.

- **Rear extensions** - should not unduly reduce light or outlook from neighbouring windows to habitable rooms, overshadow or create an unacceptable sense of enclosure to neighbouring gardens. They should not look out of place, overbearing or bulky from surrounding areas.
- **Front extensions** - Front porches may be acceptable provided they are of appropriate scale style and design.
- **Front Dormers** - on semi-detached or terraced houses will not normally be acceptable due to their unbalancing effect on adjoining houses and the general street scene.
- **Side Dormers** - may be required to give headroom over a new staircase. Where this cannot be avoided, a hipped dormer is generally preferable to a flat roofed dormer. If you cannot do this and still achieve the headroom you need you may have to locate your new staircase into an existing first floor room instead.
- **Rear Dormers** - are generally acceptable on the rear of buildings where they are not too large for the existing roof slope.

## DO I NEED CONSENT FROM THE COUNCIL?

### 1. Planning Permission

Planning permission is generally required for new buildings, but some smaller house extensions may fall within a special exemption called 'permitted development'. If they do, they will not require planning permission but they may require approval under the Building Regulations and if appropriate, Listed Building Consent.

In many cases, depending on their size and siting the formation of dormers or detached buildings in gardens may constitute 'permitted development'. In all cases check to see if consent will be required under the Building Regulations.

A booklet "Planning, A householders guide" which is a Government publication, explains the various categories of 'permitted development' and is available from the Council.

### 2. Special Rules in Conservation Areas

A conservation area is an area identified and designated by the local authority as being of special architectural and historic interest. Within conservation areas different 'permitted development' rules apply, and because of their particular character, the Council will require a higher standard of design and materials than elsewhere. A leaflet describing the borough's conservation areas is available from the planning department.

Some of the conservation areas are subject to what is known as 'Article 4 Directions'. These directions require that planning permission be obtained for extensions or alterations that would otherwise constitute 'permitted development'. Further information and advice including Conservation Area Character Appraisal Statements are available from the council.

For residents of the Hampstead Garden Suburb, any external change to a property including restoration of original work is likely to require the separate consent of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust Ltd as well as planning permission. Consent for internal building work may also be required.

Residents should always check first with the Trust at the earliest possible stage. The Council and the Trust have produced a design guidance leaflet for the Suburb. This is available from the planning department.

Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust details are available at the end of this leaflet.

### 3. Enforcement

**Take care! Failure to obtain planning permission can lead to enforcement action being taken and you may have to take down your extension.**

It is also important to make sure you build what you actually have consent for. If you build something bigger, or with different details or windows it is likely that enforcement action will be taken against you. This may mean you having to rebuild your extension in line with your consent.

### 4. Listed Buildings

Extensions or internal and external alterations (Including any demolition) which affect the character of a listed building will require listed building consent in addition to any planning permission which may be necessary. The fact that a proposed extension may itself be 'permitted development' does not negate the need to obtain listed building consent.

If you are considering works to alter or extend a listed building you are strongly advised to discuss your proposals with the planning department at an early stage. Failure to obtain listed building consent is a criminal offence punishable by a fine or even imprisonment.

### OTHER LEGISLATION

All applicants should also check whether:

- (a) Any trees which might be affected by the proposal are subject to a Tree Preservation Order. Consent will probably be required for any work affecting preserved trees, including the cutting of roots
- (b) The proposed building works require permission under the Building Regulations. It is almost certain that the types of extension described here will require Building Regulations approval.

(c) If you intend to work on an existing wall or structure shared with another property; build a free standing wall or a wall of a building up to or astride the boundary with a neighbouring property or excavate near a neighbouring building you may have to notify neighbours under the provisions of the Party Wall etc. Act 1996.

### **HOW TO APPLY FOR PLANNING PERMISSION**

Planning permission will be required for extensions to houses which fall outside the scope of "permitted development".

In order to apply for planning permission you will need to submit three copies of the completed application forms together with the appropriate fee and three copies of accurately scaled drawings. These should include:

- (a) Elevations (front, side and rear as appropriate) normally at 1:50 or 1:100 scale.
- (b) A floorplan showing internal alterations.
- (c) A location plan (at 1:1250 scale) with the site outlined in red. Location plans may be purchased from the council.

A leaflet giving further guidance on submitting a planning application is available from the planning department.

The local authority aims to determine applications for house extensions within eight weeks wherever possible.

### **CERTIFICATES OF LAWFUL DEVELOPMENT**

If you are in any doubt as to whether planning permission is required you can apply to the Council for a Certificate of Lawful Development. The certificate confirms whether or not planning permission would be required for the proposal. The appropriate forms and an explanatory leaflet are available from the Council and should be submitted with the appropriate fee.

## OTHER USEFUL PUBLICATIONS

Available from  
The Planning, Highways and Design Service  
Barnet House  
1255 High Road  
Whetstone  
London N20 OEJ  
T 020 8359 2000

- The Unitary Development Plan. London Borough of Barnet (1991)
- The Draft Revised Unitary Development Plan. London Borough of Barnet (Mar 2001)  
[http://www.barnet.gov.uk/environment\\_transport/udp/udp2001a.php3](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/environment_transport/udp/udp2001a.php3)
- Design Guidance Notes. (London Borough of Barnet)
  - The Construction of Hardstandings and Vehicular Crossovers.
  - The Removal or Alteration of Chimney Stacks
  - The Replacement of Windows and Doors
  - Materials and Colour
  - Porches
  - Shopfronts
  - Advertisements
- Conservation Area Character Appraisal statements. (London Borough of Barnet)
- Conservation Area Design Guidance Notes. (London Borough of Barnet)
- The Party Wall etc. Act 1996, explanatory booklet DETR
- Planning, A Householders guide DETR (1997)
- Protected Trees, A Guide to Tree Preservation Orders DETR (1999)

## USEFUL ADDRESSES

For further information please contact  
Development Control Section

Barnet House  
1255 High Road  
Whetstone  
London N20 OEJ

T 020 8359 2000

F 020 8359 4616

E [planning.enquiry@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:planning.enquiry@barnet.gov.uk)

W

[http://www.barnet.gov.uk/environment\\_transport/planning/index.php3](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/environment_transport/planning/index.php3)

For listed building and conservation area enquiries contact;

This document supplements and expands upon the policies contained within the adopted Unitary Development Plan. The advice it contains is consistent with those policies and therefore has the status of supplementary planning guidance.

## Strategic Planning

London Borough of Barnet

T 020 8359 2000

F 020 8359 6054

For building regulation enquiries contact;

Building Regulation Service

London Borough of Barnet

T 020 8359 2000

F 020 8359 4639

This document gives advice and guidelines for extensions to houses.  
The information used in this publication will be used in determining planning applications.  
If you would like more information please contact the Translation unit on 0208 359 6114

Arabic

هذه الوثيقة تعطي نصائح وإرشادات لتوسيع وبناء الملاحق للمساكن. المعلومات المحتوية في هذه النشرة تستعمل في تحديد طلبات التخطيط للتصاميم. إذا رغبتكم في المزيد من المعلومات الرجاء الإتصال بمصلحة الترجمة على رقم الهاتف : 0208 359 6114 الإثنين من الساعة 10 إلى 12 صباحاً.

Bengali

এই দলিলে বাড়ি বাড়াবার জন্যে পরামর্শ ও নির্দেশ দেওয়া আছে। পরিকল্পনার আবেদন বিবেচনা করার জন্যে এই প্রকাশনার তথ্যগুলি ব্যবহার করা হবে। আপনি যদি আরো খবর জানতে চান, তাহলে মঙ্গলবার সকাল ১০টা থেকে বেলা ১২টার মধ্যে অনুবাদ বিভাগের সঙ্গে (ট্রান্সলেশন ইউনিট) 020 8359 6114 - এই নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Cantonese

這份文件給予擴展房屋的建議及指引。在這刊物內的資料將用來決定建築計劃的申請。如你需要更多資料，請在星期四早上十時至中午十二時電 0208 359 6114 與翻譯組聯絡。

Farsi

این سند دومورد توسعه منازل بشما هدایت و رهنمایی مینماید. معلوماتی که درین نشریه گنجانبده شده است جهت اجرای نهایی پیشنهادات طرح ریزی شده مورد استفاده قرار خواهند گرفت. اگر شما اطلاعات بیشتری را در زمینه خواهانید، لطفاً به واحد ترجمه یا (بونت ترجمه) بروزهای جمعه تساعت ۱۰ الی ۱۲ قبل از ظهر به شماره ۰۲۰۸۳۵۹۶۱۱۴ ارتباط بگیرید.

Greek

Αυτό το έγγραφο δίνει συμβουλές και οδηγίες για επεκτάσεις σπιτιών. Οι πληροφορίες που βρίσκονται σ' αυτή την έκδοση θα χρησιμοποιηθούν για να καθορίσουν αιτήσεις σχεδίων. Αν θα θέλατε περισσότερες πληροφορίες παρακαλώ απευθυνθείτε στο τμήμα Μετάφρασης στο 0208 359 6114 τις Δευτέρες μεταξύ 1-3 μετά το μεσημέρι.

Gujarati

આ દસ્તાવેજમાં ઘરમાં વધારાનું બાંધકામ કરીને ઘર મોટું બનાવવા વિશે સલાહ તેમજ માર્ગદર્શિકા આપવામાં આવી છે. આ પ્રકાશનમાં ઉપયોગમાં લેવામાં આવેલી માહિતીનો ઉપયોગ પ્લાનિંગની અરજીઓનો નિર્ણય લેવા માટે કરવામાં આવશે. તમને વધારે વિગતો જોઈતી હોય, તો કૃપા કરીને ટ્રાન્સલેશન યુનિટ (બાયાંતર વિભાગ)નો ગુરુવારે બપોરે 1થી 4 દરમિયાન 020 8359 6114 ઉપર સંપર્ક કરો.

Turkish

Bu belge konutlara yapılan ilavelere ilişkin öneri ve yol gösterici bilgiler sunmaktadır. Bu yayımda kullanılan bilgiler planlama başvurularının karara bağlanmasında kullanılacaktır. Fazla bilgi istiyorsanız lütfen Cuma günleri saat 13.00-15.00 arası Çeviri birimi ile 0208 359 6114'ten iletişime geçiniz.

Urdu

اس کتابچے میں مکان میں اضافی تعمیر کرنے یعنی ایکسٹینشن کے بارے میں صلاح دہی گئی اور رہنمائی کی گئی ہے۔ اس معلومات کی بنیاد پر پلاننگ اپلی کیشنز یعنی اضافی تعمیر کی درخواست پر کارروائی کی جاتی ہے۔ اگر آپ کو مزید معلومات درکار ہو تو برائے مہربانی ہر منگل کے دن دوپہر دو سے پانچ (2-5 pm) کے درمیان فون نمبر 020 8359 6114 سے رابطہ کیجئے۔