

19. Extensions, alterations and conservatories

PURPOSE

- 19.1. This guidance aims to provide advice to those seeking to alter or extend a residential property, including the installation of conservatories. The principles of this guidance also apply to extensions and alterations to other types of property. It encourages high quality design that respects and enhances the character and appearance of a property and its surroundings, and also covers matters such as outlook, privacy and overlooking. Poorly designed alterations and extensions can cause harm to a property, its neighbours and the surrounding area.
- 19.2. This guidance relates to Replacement UDP policies B3 - Alterations and extensions, SD6 - Amenity for occupiers and neighbours, B6 - Listed buildings and B7 - Conservation areas.

APPLICATION

- 19.3. This guidance applies to all proposals for alterations and extensions to residential properties, although some aspects will be relevant to alterations and extensions to other types of buildings. It will form a material consideration in the assessment of applications for planning permission and should also be used a best practice guide for extensions and alterations that do not require planning permission.
- 19.4. In addition to this guidance, reference should also be made to the *Camden Green Buildings Guide*. This has been produced by the Council to help put into practice ideas and approaches for renovating homes in an environmentally friendly way. Copies can be viewed on Camden's website (www.camden.gov.uk/planning).
- 19.5. For locations in conservation areas reference should also be made to the relevant **Conservation Area Statement**. These describe the area and its special character and include guidelines that provide the framework for development proposals in the area (also refer to Camden Planning Guidance on **Conservation areas**).
- 19.6. Where an extension or alteration to a roof is proposed, reference should be made to Camden Planning Guidance on **Roofs and terraces**.

WHEN IS PLANNING PERMISSION NEEDED?

- 19.7. In determining whether or not planning permission is required for residential extensions, the following factors are taken into account:
- the type of property (for example, some types of work that do not need permission when carried out on single dwelling houses do need permission when carried out on flats);
 - the size of the extension (in terms of height and volume);
 - the location of the property (in conservation areas permission is needed for some works that would not need permission elsewhere).
- 19.8. Some properties in the borough are covered by an Article 4 direction, made under the *Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988* (as amended), which removes the right to undertake certain works without planning permission. Where

this is the case, reference should be made to the Camden Planning Guidance on **Article 4 directions**.

- 19.9. There are additional requirements for listed buildings. Listed building consent is required for works to a listed building (including both external and internal works) that would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest (refer to Camden Planning Guidance on **Listed buildings** and Planning Policy Guidance 15 '*Planning and the Historic Environment*').
- 19.10. The government has produced a helpful guide to when planning permission is needed. "*Planning: A guide for householders*" is available from the Department for Communities and Local Government website (www.odpmcommunities.gov.uk/planning) (also refer to the *Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995*).
- 19.11. Further guidance on whether you need planning permission for works to your property is available from the Council's duty planner. You can call the duty planner on 020-7974 1911 or call in person at Culture and Environment Department Reception, 5th floor, Camden Town Hall Extension, Argyle Street. The service operates between 9 am - 5 pm Monday - Wednesday and Friday, and between 9 am and 7 pm on Thursdays.

GUIDANCE

Rear extensions

- 19.12. A rear extension is often the most appropriate way to extend a house or property. However, rear extensions that are insensitively or inappropriately designed can spoil the appearance of a property or group of properties and harm the amenity of neighbouring properties, for example in terms of outlook, daylight and sunlight.

General principles

- 19.13. Rear extensions should be designed to:
- be subordinate to the building being extended, in terms of location, form, scale proportions and dimensions;
 - respect the original design and proportions of the building, including its architectural period and style;
 - respect existing architectural features, such as projecting bays or decorative balconies;
 - respect the historic pattern and established grain of the surrounding area, including the ratio of built to unbuilt space;
 - make sure it does not cause a loss of amenity to adjacent properties with regard to sunlight, daylight, overshadowing, light pollution/spillage privacy/overlooking, and sense of enclosure; and
 - allow for the retention of a reasonable sized garden.
- 19.14. Materials should be chosen that are sympathetic to the existing building wherever possible. (See also Camden Planning Guidance on **Materials and resources**)

Height of rear extensions

- 19.15. In order for new extensions to be subordinate to the original building, their heights should respect existing building heights. Ground floor extensions are generally considered preferable to those at higher levels. The maximum acceptable height of an extension should be determined in relation to the points outlined above in paragraph 13. In cases where a higher extension is appropriate, a shallow depth plan will generally be preferable to compensate for any increase in visual mass and bulk, overshadowing and overlooking that may be caused by the additional height.
- 19.16. In most cases, extensions that are higher than one full storey below roof eaves/parapet level, or that rise above the general height of neighbouring projections and nearby extensions, will be strongly discouraged.

Width of rear extensions

- 19.17. The width of rear extensions should respect the design of the original building. Full width or overly wide extensions can dominate the original building in terms of bulk and form and may obscure original features. They will be resisted where they are visible from the street.
- 19.18. In addition, the rear of some buildings may be architecturally distinguished, either forming a harmonious composition, or visually contribute to the townscape. The Council will seek to preserve these where appropriate. Some of the Borough's important rear elevations are identified in Conservation Area Statements.

Side extensions

- 19.19. Certain building forms may lend themselves to side extensions. Such extensions should be designed to:
- not be unduly prominent in the streetscape and be subordinate to the building being extended, in terms of location, building lines, height, bulk, mass, form and scale;
 - take into account the size, character and design of the property and patterns of development in the surrounding area;
 - retain gaps between buildings above ground floor level;
 - use materials which are sympathetic to the original building; and
 - make sure there is no loss of amenity to adjacent properties with regard to sunlight, daylight, overshadowing, privacy/overlooking and sense of enclosure.

See also Figure 1 'Side extensions'.

- 19.20. In many streets in the north of the Borough houses have mature rear gardens that can often be seen through gaps between buildings, softening the urban scene and providing visual interest. The infilling of gaps will not be considered acceptable where:
- significant views or gaps are compromised or blocked;
 - the established front building line is compromised;
 - the architectural symmetry or integrity of a composition is impaired;
 - the original architectural features on a flank wall are obscured; or
 - access to the rear of a property is lost.

- 19.21. Where a property is located in a conservation area, reference should be made to the relevant Conservation Area Statements, which often identify important gaps and vistas where infilling would be inappropriate.

Figure 1 - Side Extensions



Conservatories

- 19.22. Conservatories should normally:
- be located adjacent to secondary façades of the building;
 - be subordinate to the building being extended in terms of height, mass, bulk and plan form;
 - respect the period and architectural detailing of the original building;
 - be located at ground or basement level. Only in exceptional circumstances will conservatories be allowed on upper levels;
 - not extend the full width of a building. If a conservatory fills a gap beside a solid extension, it must be set back from the building line of the solid extension.
- 19.23. Conservatories should not overlook or cause light pollution to neighbouring properties. If necessary, opaque lightweight materials such as obscured glass should be used on facades abutting neighbouring properties, or the shape of the conservatory should be changed to minimise the overlooking.

Outlook

- 19.24. The planning system cannot protect views from individual private properties, but it can take into account outlook in terms of the effect of buildings that have an overbearing appearance or impact on neighbouring properties.
- 19.25. The amenity of neighbouring properties in terms of outlook should be considered when extensions are designed. Two storey extensions, long extensions, and those that are near to a property boundary are likely to have greater impact in terms of outlook.
- 19.26. The Council will resist extensions that harm the outlook of neighbouring properties by being unduly dominant and oppressive.

Privacy and overlooking

- 19.27. Extensions and/or alterations should not cause an unreasonable degree of overlooking in neighbouring dwellings or private garden areas. For further guidance see Camden Planning Guidance on **Overlooking and privacy**.

Daylight and sunlight

- 19.28. The size and position of extensions can affect the amount of light available to both the extended building and neighbouring properties. Extensions should not cause an unacceptable loss of daylight to neighbouring properties. Loss of sunlight should also be considered. For further guidance on this matter see Camden Planning Guidance on **Daylight and sunlight**.

External alterations

- 19.29. When undertaking external alterations to existing buildings, reference should be made to the good practice principles set out below and the general design considerations for residential facades shown in Figure 2 - 'Alterations to Residential Façades'.

19.30. **Good practice principles for external alterations**

- As a general guide, the most satisfactory alterations are those which take into account the character and design of the property and its surroundings and use matching materials and design details.

19.31. **Windows**

- Where it is necessary to alter or replace windows that are original or in the style of the originals, they should be replaced like with like wherever possible in order to preserve the character of the property and the surrounding area. New windows should match the originals as closely as possible in terms of type, fenestration pattern and proportions, opening method, materials and finishes, detailing and the overall size of the window opening. Planning permission may be required for replacement windows which do not match the existing. (See also Camden Planning Guidance on **Windows**.)
- Where timber is the traditional window material, replacement timber frames are preferable to uPVC or aluminium frames. Similarly, where steel is the traditional window material, steel replacements will be sought wherever possible. (See also Camden Planning Guidance on **Materials and resources**)
- Consideration should be given to the Building Research Establishment's (BRE) *Green Guide to Specification* when sourcing replacement window frames.
- The Council will resist proposals for replacement windows in listed buildings, unless an exceptional case can be made for such works. The Council will also resist proposals for double-glazed sealed units in listed buildings. Listed building consent will be required for replacement windows, secondary glazing and double-glazing in listed buildings.
- Where double-glazing is proposed for buildings in conservation areas or for developments that may affect views into conservation areas, internal secondary glazing should be used and the original window should be left intact. See also the Camden leaflet *A Guide to Replacement Windows* (1999).

19.32. **Materials**

- Wherever possible, materials should match the colour and texture of the existing building. (See also Camden Planning Guidance on **Materials and resources**)

- Materials for alterations should weather well, so their ageing process contributes positively to the character of the building, and wider context.
- Original surface finishes should be retained wherever possible, as they are usually central to the architectural treatment of a building. These may cover the entire building or façade (such as stucco facing), highlight specific features (such as windows or doors) or act as decorative elements (such as ironwork or terracotta panels).
- When repairing existing wall finishes, the composition of the original material (such as plaster, stucco or render) should be determined, the defective area cut out and a replacement material of identical chemical composition applied and properly bonded.

19.33. Brick / stonework

- Alterations or repairs to brickwork or stonework should match the original in all respects while satisfying the needs of durability and maintenance. This should include matching the original bond and mortar colour and the retention of existing pointing where possible.
- Samples of brick type and mortar colour should be submitted to the Council as part of any application.
- Painting, rendering or cladding of brickwork will normally be resisted, as it is often unsightly and can damage the appearance of a building by obscuring the texture and original colour of the façade. Painting, rendering or cladding may also trap moisture, which can cause major damp problems in the masonry.

19.34. Doors

- The design, materials and finishes of front doors should be appropriate to the architectural period and style of the building. Where replacement doors are proposed, their design should consider the dimensions, proportions and joinery details of the original door and, where applicable, panelling and glazing should adhere to the original design. Where timber replacement doors are proposed reference should be made to the BRE's *Green Guide to Specification*.

19.35. External pipework and rainwater goods

- Original external pipework and rainwater goods should be repaired in a like for like manner where possible. Where they are beyond repair, like for like reinstatements should be installed, where possible. In the case of historic buildings, cast iron replicas of original pipework are preferable to uPVC pipes. New pipework should be restricted to the secondary elevations of buildings to avoid defacing the principal façade.

Figure 2 - Alterations to residential façades



Development in rear gardens that requires planning permission

- 19.36. The construction of garden buildings, including sheds, stand-alone green houses and other structures in rear gardens and other undeveloped areas, can often have a significant impact upon the amenity and character of an area. They may detract from the generally soft and green nature of garden and other open space, contributing to incremental urbanisation.
- 19.37. Large garden buildings may affect the amenity value of neighbours' gardens, and if used for purposes other than storage or gardening, may intensify the use of garden spaces.
- 19.38. Built structures on land that forms part of the public realm, may severely alter the character of the whole area. Pockets of privately owned land make important contributions to the character of certain parts of the borough, both in established neighbourhoods and areas of new development, creating a village greens, informal verges, set backs for established structures or settings for listed buildings. Building on such areas will generally be discouraged.
- 19.39. Where this type of development may be appropriate in principle, a full assessment should be made prior to the commencement of the development to avoid any potential impact upon trees or other vegetation in the surrounding area. This assessment may be required as part of an application for planning permission.
- 19.40. The siting and design of the proposed development should be carefully considered to minimise its impact on the surrounding area and neighbour amenity. Where necessary, suitable soft landscaping should be considered to reduce the impact of the proposed development.
- 19.41. The choice of materials must be carefully considered to ensure that development in rear gardens respects the existing properties in the neighbourhood and the overall character of the surrounding area. The construction method should minimise any

impact on trees (see also Camden Planning Guidance on **Landscaping and trees**), or adjacent existing structures.