

Customer information note

Householder proposals general principles

Where do I start?

If you are thinking about extending your property we advise that you first of all consider the characteristics of your property, its relationship to neighbouring properties and the character and appearance of the wider area. Window positions, boundary treatments, levels differences, relationship to surrounding properties (including the path of the sun) and the style and character of development in the area are all important factors which you will need to take into account. This process is known as “site appraisal”. It will help you and/or your agent to design your proposal so that it is of an appropriate scale, form and design which will have a positive impact on the site and its surroundings, whilst still meeting your needs.

What about my neighbours?

When we receive your planning application we will notify your immediate neighbours and invite them to comment. We strongly advise that you discuss your proposals with your neighbours at the earliest possible stage, before submitting your application, and that you let them have a copy of your plans.

How do I apply for planning permission?

You will need to complete a planning application form, submit plans and drawings to scale and (if appropriate) pay an application fee. We have detailed guidance notes to help you. It is helpful if you supply photographs of the site and surroundings and if you provide details of your site appraisal. We will need to see from your drawings how the extension will relate to neighbouring properties in terms of its size and siting and (if affecting the appearance of the property from the front) how it will appear in the street scene. You may wish to engage an agent to draw up your plans and deal with the submission of the planning application for you.

How will you assess my proposal?

This may vary depending on the circumstances of each case. Generally we will assess each proposal against a set of principles. These principles are set out in this information sheet. A planning officer will visit the site and make an assessment, taking into account the relevant principles and any comments received from neighbours and consultees. A senior officer will review the file and will make the final decision. It is helpful if you explain, as part of your planning application submission, how you have taken the principles into account in the design of your scheme.

What is a design and access statement?

We encourage you to submit a design and access statement with your application. If your property is in a conservation area you are required to submit a design and access statement as we cannot, legally, deal with your application without one. You will need to set out how your design will make a positive contribution to the site and surroundings. We recommend that you follow the principles which are set out on the following pages. Further information is available on our web site and/or at our Development Enquiry Centre.

Principles for assessment of householder proposals

Townscape/design and character

The townscape of an area and general street scene is an important consideration in deciding the appropriate form, size and distances to the boundaries for extensions (including proposals for dormers and roof alterations). The character of an area is defined by the design, dominant building type, spaces between the buildings, materials, heights, level differences, the boundaries (walls, fences, hedges, trees and other vegetation) and trees and vegetation within the site itself and surroundings. In areas where the spaces between the dwellings are an important characteristic, for example large plots with mature landscaped boundaries or semi detached dwellings with distinctive space between dwellings provided by drives, regard should be had to these characteristics in deciding upon the size and design for the extension. Extensions should be in keeping with and respect the character of the area.

Privacy

Extensions should not unreasonably reduce the privacy of neighbouring property by allowing intrusive views into habitable room windows or private gardens; in particular the most used areas such as patios. In considering privacy issues you should take account of the position of the windows you are proposing, window sizes, the use of obscure glazing (non opening windows where appropriate), level differences and existing and proposed screening by fences, trees and shrubs. Upstairs windows cannot easily be screened and adequate distances should be allowed to neighbouring boundaries. A reasonable indicative distance from a first floor main window to the boundary would be 10.5 metres, although there will be individual circumstances affecting each case.

Overshadowing

House extensions should be carefully sited to ensure that they do not take significant daylight and sunlight from the main windows and garden areas of neighbouring dwellings. You should in particular have regard to the extension's proximity to the side boundary. Normally, the larger the extension the further it should be set from that boundary.

Dominance

The acceptability of a two storey extension to the side or rear will depend upon the visual impact on the neighbouring dwelling. The relationship between the first floor element of the extension and the neighbouring side boundaries is of importance when assessing whether a proposal is over dominant, overbearing or impacting on a neighbour's outlook (although there is no right to a view across a neighbour's property).

Driveways

There should normally be provision for two off street car parking spaces, it may be fewer in some areas e.g. the city centre (or to meet the City Council's adopted guidelines). Where one space is sited in front of a garage at least 5.6 meters should be allowed between the garage and the footpath to enable an up and over garage door to be opened. This distance may be reduced if a roller shutter or similar door is used.

Private garden space

Extensions should leave sufficient usable private garden/yard space for the enjoyment of residents. Normally no more than half of the existing garden space should be covered by extensions. The space should normally be free of car parking.

Bin stores

On dwellings where “wheelie bins” are stored within public view, the provision of a bin store would be an important contribution to the visual amenity of the area. Where bin storage is to the side or rear of the property, adequate access should be retained.

Green belt

The City Council regards protection of the openness of the green belt as one of its most important functions. The scope for extending dwellings which are sited in the green belt is usually more limited as there is a presumption against development which would have an urbanising effect and which would harm the openness of the green belt. You will need to show on your application drawings what part of the proposal comprises the “original dwelling” i.e. the dwelling as originally built, discounting any previous extensions. In assessing the proposal we will take into account any previous extensions and the extent to which the original footprint, scale, height and mass of the dwelling is to be enlarged by the development proposal. The important considerations to bear in mind are that it is the original dwelling against which the proposal is measured and that the totality of extensions should not be disproportionate to the original dwelling.

Listed buildings and conservation areas

Proposals to extend listed buildings and/or properties within conservation areas will, by their nature, require careful consideration as, in assessing these proposals, the City Council has to have regard to its special duties for preserving or enhancing the conservation area and/or protecting the character of the listed building. Many listed buildings can accommodate some form of sensitively designed extension without the loss of their specific character or special interest. The interiors and special features of listed buildings are important. In most cases listed building consent will be required for alterations and extensions as well as planning permission. You may wish to engage a designer with specialist skills in historic buildings for these types of proposals. Further information on the design of developments in historic area and affecting listed buildings is available on our web site and/or at our Development Enquiry Centre. Don't forget that you are required to submit a design and access statement if your property is in a conservation area and/or is a listed building.

Detailing

In addition to the general form and size of the extension, care should be taken to the detailing. Part of the character and appearance of a dwelling is determined by its detailing including walling materials (e.g. stone, brick, artificial stone etc), roof materials (e.g. stone slate, concrete tiling), windows and door styles (including frames, sills and heads). Whilst it is not always possible to recreate the existing details perfectly, for instance in older dwellings, care should be taken to reflect the existing details of the dwelling and its surroundings as much as possible.

Materials

Traditionally houses in Leeds have been constructed from natural stone or red brick. However, a number of other materials have emerged in house building in more recent times. In most cases an extension should be built in materials to closely match the materials of the existing dwelling. Particularly in the case of houses which are in conservation areas and/or are listed buildings traditional materials and methods should be employed to retain the character of the area and that of the house itself. In some cases, where a match cannot be achieved, or the Council advises of such, a deliberate contrast may be preferred over a poor match of materials.