



# Supplementary Planning Guidance Note

## No.01 Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings

Adopted by Flintshire  
County Council on 17th  
January 2017



## Purpose

It is Flintshire County Council's intention to prepare and keep up to date a series of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) Notes which will provide detailed guidance on a range of development issues and topics. The purposes of these Notes are:

- To assist the public and their agents in preparing planning proposals and to guide them in discussions with officers prior to the submission of planning applications,
- To guide officers in handling, and officers and councillors in deciding, planning applications, and
- To assist Inspectors in the determination of appeals

The overall aim is to improve the quality of new development and facilitate a consistent and transparent approach to decision making.

## Planning policies: the Flintshire context

### The Development Plan

Under planning legislation, the planning policies for each area should be set out formally in the Development Plan. Flintshire County Council, as the Local Planning Authority (LPA), has a legal duty to prepare and keep up to date a development plan for the County, and the Flintshire Unitary Development Plan was adopted in 2011. The UDP provides broad policies together with allocations of land for all the main uses such as housing, employment and retailing, and will help to shape the future of Flintshire in a physical and environmental sense as well as influencing it in economic and social terms. The Plan therefore seeks:

- To help the Council make rational and consistent decisions on planning applications by providing a policy framework consistent with national policy and
- To guide development to appropriate locations over the period up to 2015.

### The need for Supplementary Planning Guidance

Despite the Plan containing policies with which the Council can make consistent and transparent decisions on development proposals, it cannot in itself give all the detailed advice needed by officers and prospective applicants to guide proposals at the local level, such as house extensions or conversions of agricultural buildings. The Council's intention is to prepare a range of Supplementary Planning Guidance notes (SPG) to support the UDP by providing more detailed guidance on a range of topics and issues to help the interpretation and implementation of the policies and proposals in the UDP. The review of the Local Planning Guidance Notes will be undertaken on a phased basis and details of the available SPG's can be found on the Council's website. Where there is a need to refer to another SPG this will be clearly referenced. These SPG Notes are freely available from Planning Services, Directorate of Environment, County Hall, Mold, Flintshire CH7 6NF (telephone 01352 703228), at the Planning Services reception at County Hall and can be downloaded from the Planning Web pages [www.flintshire.gov.uk/planning](http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/planning)

## The status of Supplementary Planning Guidance

Supplementary planning guidance can be taken into account as a material consideration in the decision making process. The National Assembly will give substantial weight to SPG which derives out of and is consistent with the development plan. In accordance with National Assembly advice the Council's suite of SPG's has been the subject of public consultation and Council resolution. The draft of this SPG was approved for public consultation on 04.09.14 (Council Minute no.19). The SPG was the subject of a public consultation exercise between 18.12.15 and 12.06.16. The one comment submitted to the Council has been taken into account and where appropriate amendments have been incorporated into this final draft which was approved by the Council on 17.01.17 (Council Minute no.8) for use as a material consideration in determining planning applications and appeals. A summary of the representations and the Council's response is set out in Appendix 2.

**This document should therefore be afforded considerable weight as a material planning consideration.**

# No.01 Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings

This note gives guidance regarding house extensions and alterations. It highlights some general principles relating to house extensions whilst seeking to promote good design for such proposals. The note can be used to assist pre application discussions and will constitute a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications.

## 1 - Background

1.1 - Extensions and improvements are a reasonable way of achieving more space and functionality within a dwelling, but care must be taken to ensure that all additions respect the character of the building and its locality. Whether in the open countryside or in a built-up area, proposed extensions should respect their local surroundings in terms of form, scale, aspect, design and materials. This Note is concerned with the external appearance of the dwelling, including its scale and mass. Although the planning system does not have the right to protect the views from householders' properties, it should prevent detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties and on the character of the property and its surroundings. In this sense, the planning system operates to reconcile the needs of individuals with the wider community interest.

1.2 - It is recommended that a suitably qualified professional is employed to prepare the proposals. Good design need not be more expensive; indeed, it can add value to the property and result in lower maintenance costs. Examples include designing in energy efficiency and designing to prevent (or reduce) crime. Whether or not planning permission is needed, this Guidance Note should help to bring about high quality development which will enhance the property and its neighbourhood.

1.3 - At a general level the Welsh Government publications "Planning: A Guide for Householders Version 2" offers useful advice. It is freely available from their website and an interactive version can be found at [www.planningportal.gov.uk/permission/house](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/permission/house). Certain minor changes – called "permitted development rights" – may be made without the need for planning permission, and these are explained in the publication "Permitted development for householders Version 2".

1.4 - A cautionary note: planning permission should only be applied for once the design of the scheme has been finalised. A planning officer will be able to discuss your proposals before you make an application. Any changes sought after permission has been granted may require a fresh planning application or amended plans.

## 2 - Policy

2.1 - The Welsh Government now takes a firm view on design matters, as explained in their Technical Advice Note 12 Design. At the local level, of greatest relevance to this topic is Policy HSG12 (House Extensions and Alterations) of the UDP, (see Appendix 1)

2.2 - The supporting text notes that "As a general guide, house extensions should not be more than 50% of the original floorspace and extensions that are out of scale and character will not be permitted." For clarification, "original floorspace" means that of the original dwelling rather than the existing dwelling, thereby aiming to prevent several extensions over time which, cumulatively, would become overlarge.

2.3 - Policy HSG 13 (Annex Accommodation) is relevant to proposals for accommodation for dependant relatives (sometimes known colloquially as “granny flats”) (see Appendix 1) Account must also be taken of Policy D1 Design Quality, Location and Layout and D2 Design (see Appendix 1) whereby applicants must include a short written explanation with their planning application illustrating the design principles adopted prior to the drawing up of their proposal. This will illustrate how the proposal will fit within the existing surroundings and improve the speed of the decision making process.

## 3 - Neighbours

3.1 - In the interests of good neighbour relations, it is advisable for any householder intending to extend their property to inform, and discuss their intentions with their neighbours who will be affected by the development. On all planning applications the Council will undertake consultations with neighbours likely to be affected by the proposal.

3.2 - It is the responsibility of the householder, applicant or agent making the proposals to ensure that any extension, solid wall or means of enclosure is constructed on land under the same ownership and to avoid encroachment of foundations or overhanging of guttering. Details of the Party Wall, etc. Act 1996 are available at the Planning Services office.

## 4 - Additional special considerations

4.1 - Whilst the same general principles apply across the County, special considerations apply to dwellings which are:

- Listed buildings (see LPG Note 6)
- In a conservation area (see LPG Note 7)
- In the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

4.2 - In conservation areas and the AONB permitted development rights are more restricted, which means that it is necessary to apply for planning permission for certain types of work which do not need an application in other areas; for instance, the volume limits for extensions are lower, and permission is required to clad the outside of the house.

4.3 - Any alterations or extensions which affect the character or appearance of a listed building will require listed building consent as well as planning permission. Please note that this applies to the inside as well as the outside of listed buildings.

4.4 - In all these sensitive areas, the Council will be looking for the highest design standards. It is recommended that advice on such issues is sought at an early stage from the Development Management section in the Planning Services office at County Hall, Mold, by contacting the Planning Support Officers on 01352 703234 or in the case of historic buildings and areas the Conservation and Design officer on 01352 703215.

## 5 - Advice on extensions and alterations

5.1 - The advice on extensions which follows is looked at firstly from the viewpoint of general design principles and secondly with regard to particular forms of extensions, for example rear extensions.

### General principles

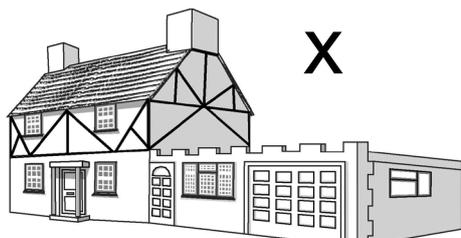
- To summarise, in altering a dwelling, several principles should be kept in mind:
- Avoid over-enlargement or drastic changes in character. (See Figure 1)
- Avoid the inappropriate, such as pseudo-historic details mimicking past styles not authentic to the building, and avoid also pseudo-foreign details intended for another climate and conditions. (See Fig.1)
- Avoid unnecessary alteration of the building's basic structure and avoid large structural works, unless these are repairs.
- Respect the building's site and surroundings. For example on hill slopes, plan the siting of the building so as to minimise cut and fill.

These principles are now examined in greater detail in terms of scale and form.

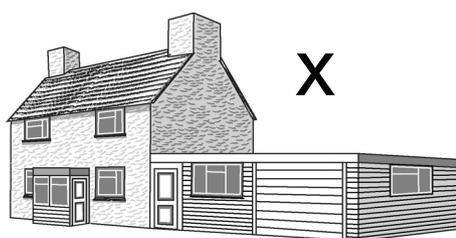
Fig 1 Good and bad ways of extending a traditional house



A typical local rural house before extension. The three examples all alter the house to give increased light to the front rooms, weather protection to the front door, and reroofing and extend it with a garage; two unsympathetically and suitably.



With pseudo-historic details, totally unauthentic



Modernised, yet neither truly old nor truly modern

Sympathetically done in relation to the building's original character



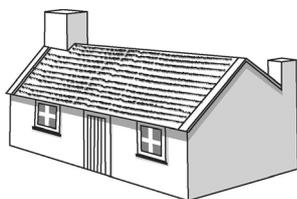
## Scale and form

5.2 - The extended building should not become over-assertive or obtrusive, nor should it harm good public views into or out of the settlement, which may be of greater concern in small villages and hamlets. Any new extension should be subsidiary or subordinate in terms of overall floor area, size, height and proportion to that of the original dwelling. With regard to the 50% guidance figure quoted earlier, it is difficult to give a precise percentage which would always be appropriate but any extension which came close to doubling the floorspace, for example, would be unlikely to appear subsidiary and therefore unlikely to receive approval. The aim should be to ensure that the extension harmonises with and complements the existing dwelling, rather than simply being added on to it. Fig. 2 illustrates these points. But it must also avoid over-dominating smaller adjoining properties, in other words it should fit with its surroundings. The extension should be centrally located on the gable to reduce its complexity and make it more traditional. Generally large windows on the gable should be avoided as they compete with the front elevation to be the focus of attention. The roof slope of the extension must be the same as that of the house. This means that the extension must be no deeper in plan than the original house. Otherwise the roof would be higher.

5.3 - The percentage increase figure will ultimately depend on the merits of each individual proposal and scenario. The important considerations are whether the house is in the countryside or in a built up area and the size of the surrounding plot. If the house is in a large plot there may be scope to extend beyond 50% whilst still maintaining the character of the existing property and the surrounding locality. The 50% figure is a commonly used general rule of thumb intended to act as an early warning that large extensions are more likely to be harmful. What is more important than a slavish adherence to the percentage figure, is the totality of the proposal in respect of size of the existing house and the general character of the area in terms of plot sizes and dwelling types. In short the emphasis is to prevent extensions to dwellings in the countryside or settlements which are deemed to be harmful to the character of the existing property and its locality.

5.4 - Separate guidance is contained in LPG Note 5 relating to the conversion of rural buildings. However where new dwellings have only come about through converting rural buildings which were deemed to be worthy of retention and were considered to be capable of being converted without the need for significant extension in the first place, any proposed extensions in this situation will require closer scrutiny to avoid destroying their character by virtue of adding on large and inappropriate extensions.

Fig 2 Extending in scale



The original small cottage



Extension in scale



Extended beyond recognition and totally unacceptable

Good design principles when considering extensions include:

- Continuation – where the extension continues the building line and roof of the original dwelling. This suits a relatively small extension. Windows, doors and materials should match the original. This would also be suitable on a smaller property, for example a terrace of shallow depth.
- Reflection - by using the same form as the original but at a smaller scale or set back in terms of building line, or with a lower roofline. This is appropriate on larger properties with a deeper plan form.
- Separation – where the original house has special features or a distinctive character which it would be difficult to emulate by either of the two previous methods, the extension could be linked by a porch, hallway or gallery. This is difficult to achieve successfully and should be carried out by a qualified architect.

5.6 - The extension should not result in an overdevelopment of the residential curtilage. LPG Note 2 (Space Around Dwellings) gives the Council's minimum standards for garden areas, parking spaces, site boundaries, distances between properties with overlooking windows, and distances to plot boundaries from the building. Extensions should not result in the loss of existing parking spaces where to do so would cause road safety or congestion problems. Furthermore, extensions should not lead to the loss of large areas of garden which could then lead to future applications for garden extensions, particularly in rural settlements or in the open countryside.

5.7 - LPG Note 4 covers "Trees and Development", and aims to retain trees wherever possible and to avoid encroachment upon trees, which may still be growing.

## Materials

5.8 - The external walls and the roof of the extension should normally be sympathetic to those on the original building in terms of the type, texture and colour of materials used, as should the pointing of brickwork and stonework. Should the building have been altered inappropriately in the past, it may on occasions be better to seek to relate the extension to nearby buildings which have better retained the vernacular, that is, the indigenous local style.

5.9 - Sustainability issues should be borne in mind, such as trying to use local materials (brick, stone or timber, as appropriate) and by using energy efficient materials and features. Sometimes contrasting materials can work well, for example, the use of corrugated iron cladding has a traditional place in the countryside. However the extensive use of glazing often set in thick timber is not often suitable as these materials are very prominent and can draw undue attention away from the more muted appearance of the original building.

## Design

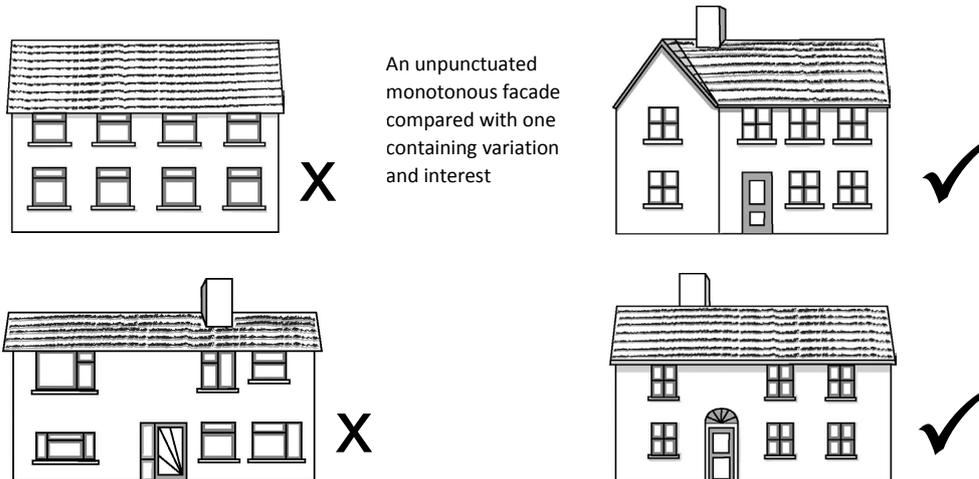
5.10 - In order to produce a visually suitable design, account should be taken of the following considerations:

- Punctuation – the giving of greater or lesser emphasis to different parts of a design to avoid monotony and incoherence.
- Balance – the placing of the parts of a design to create a settled composition rather than a restless, unsettled appearance;

- Resolution – the giving of major emphasis to one important element of the composition, to give a focus and avoid the confusion of different parts competing for attention in a jumble of unrelated parts.

5.11 - The focal point should be clear, and from there the other elements of the design should be placed, proportioned and detailed so as to allow the eye to “read” the whole design in an orderly way. These principles are explained better by illustrations than words. Fig. 3 shows these considerations in both good and bad terms.

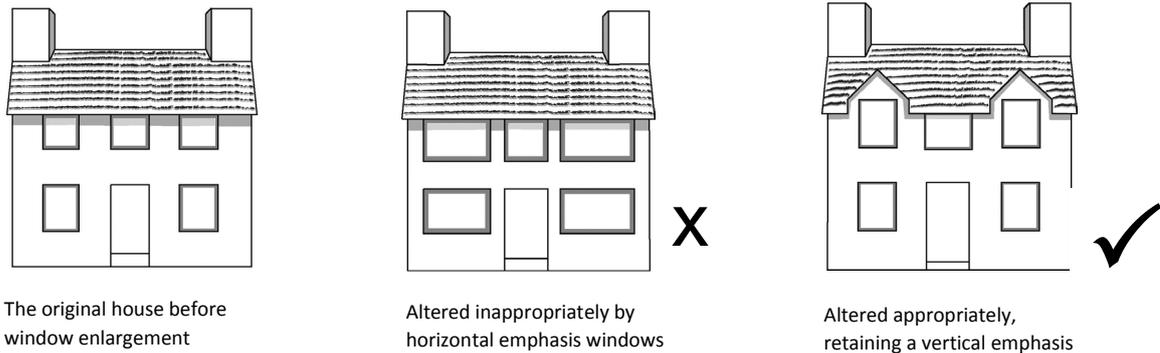
Fig 3 Punctuation, balance and resolution



The restless, unsettling, jumbled form altered to a balanced composition which does not have to be symmetrical to work  
Both good examples introduce a focus whereas in the others the parts compete for attention

5.12 - The use of unnecessary elements should be avoided. These simply add clutter when generally speaking a simple symmetrical form is appropriate. In altering a traditional house or cottage, care should be taken to respect its scale and character. Enlarging openings and raising door, window or ceiling heights can easily destroy this scale and character unless sensitively handled, therefore as a rule such change should be kept to a minimum. The proportion of solid (wall, roof) to void (windows, doors) should be carefully considered, as illustrated in Fig 4. In traditional buildings solid areas dominated voids, whereas in modern buildings the reverse is often the case. Traditional buildings should retain this characteristic. In almost every case, traditional window openings or the glazing bar elements within the frames display a vertical orientation. This draws the eye upwards rather than across the face of the building and creates a settled composition with the eye being drawn to a resting point at the eaves or roof of the building. This orientation also allows the viewer to take in one building at a time. The best proportions have been found to comprise what is known as the Golden Section, comprising approximately 1.4 units vertically to 1 horizontally. Windows should always be set back deeply from the walls and by a minimum of 80mm. This is a traditional feature and gives the appearance of strength.

Fig 4 Proportions



5.12 - These principles apply just as much to more modern houses as indicated by the example of a 1930's semi-detached in Fig. 5.

Fig 5 Good and bad ways of extending a typical 1930's semi-detached house



The left keeps the character of the original and its features such as tile hanging and brick detailing.

The right introduces a flat-roofed extension, spoils the proportions, and loses original detailing

5.13 - The design of the roof, wall and window detailing should be in harmony with the architectural balance of the existing dwelling, provided that the existing building has not previously been inappropriately altered. The extension should also respect any repetitive spacing between buildings and fit in unobtrusively into the pattern of development rather than dominating its neighbours. In a street of semi detached houses, this is best achieved by setting back the extension as far as possible from the building line. The size, type, material, finish and design of windows on an extension should be related to those on the existing house. It would be wrong to introduce a horizontal emphasis, for instance, where the present windows have – as is usual in older houses – a vertical emphasis. Timber casements or sash windows may set the pattern. The position of windows relative to neighbouring properties is covered in LPG Note 2, with the aim of minimising overlooking. Where walls of extensions are close to a boundary, windows at first floor level should be omitted or have obscured, non-opening glazing, but this should not be used in what are classed as habitable rooms.

5.14 - When an extension is reasonably prominent pitched roofs are the best solution, but there may be less visible situations at the rear of properties in which a flat roof is acceptable. The pitched roof of the extension should not be higher than that of the existing dwelling, and its pitch, angles and materials should match those of the existing structure. A flat roofed extension must be no higher than the eaves of the house.

5.15 - Details of ridges, eaves, gutters and downpipes should be shown on the drawings. In conservation areas and on listed buildings, materials used (e.g. cast iron) will be a significant consideration.

5.16 - Walls, railings and gates of merit should be taken into account, with good examples being retained as much as possible. Where original walls have been removed, consideration should be given to their reinstatement in whole or part. Where new entrances are proposed, these should be in proportion to the existing walls and hedges. Ornate 'hacienda' style gateways with ornate sweeping brick walls and pillars should be avoided.

## 6 - Particular forms of extensions

### Front extensions

6.1 - Normally extensions should not project forward of the existing building but in certain situations, where to do so would reflect an existing feature of the locality, they may be acceptable. Also, where the existing building is set well back and the front extension reflects the design of the existing and does not cause detriment to the neighbouring dwellings it may be satisfactory to allow a sizeable front extension. The 45° guide, described under rear extensions, may be applicable. Care should be taken not to reduce car parking below the required level, as set in LPG Note 11 Parking Standards.

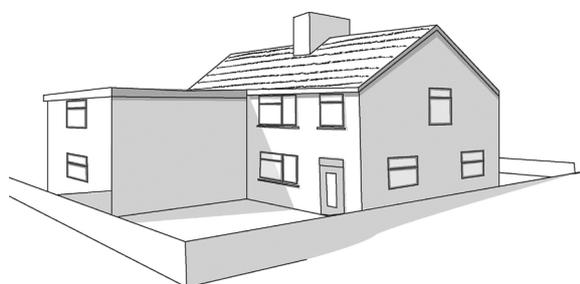
### Side extensions

6.2 - Flat roofed extensions, which do not relate to the design of the existing building, are not generally acceptable. A side extension should not fill in the gap between residential properties so as to create the impression of a terrace in a line of detached or semi-detached houses, but setting back the extension by a metre or two could maintain a visual break. Generally the width of the extension should not exceed half the width of the existing frontage of the property, nor should it exceed half the width of the garden/plot between the property and the adjacent highway.

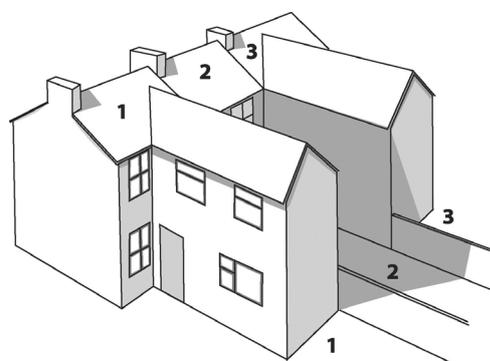
### Rear extensions

6.3 - As always, care should be taken to avoid adversely affecting the amenities of neighbours, as explained in LPG Note 2. Figure 6 shows examples of how not to do it.

Fig 6 Unacceptable rear extensions



Overlarge, insensitive, takes up too much of the garden



The middle house in this terrace is now badly overshadowed by the neighbours' overlarge extensions

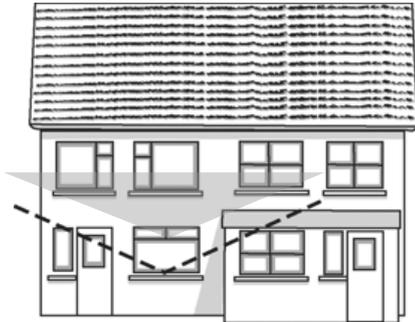
6.4 - Generally, the Council will not permit rear extensions which are deeper than the width of the gable. The Council uses as a guide the 45° code, explained in Figure 7. In summary, a 45° line is drawn from the midpoint of a sill of a window in a habitable room in an adjacent house. If the proposed extension would go beyond that line it would probably result in an unacceptable loss of light. (But this requirement would normally exclude windows on side/gable elevations, otherwise spaces between dwellings fronting a highway would have to be widened to an unacceptable level.) The impact of the height of an extension can be assessed by drawing a line upwards at an angle of 25°. For a bungalow the extension should not be higher.

## Fig 7 The 45° Guide

### Example 1

Single storey rear extension  
Semi detached house

#### Rear View

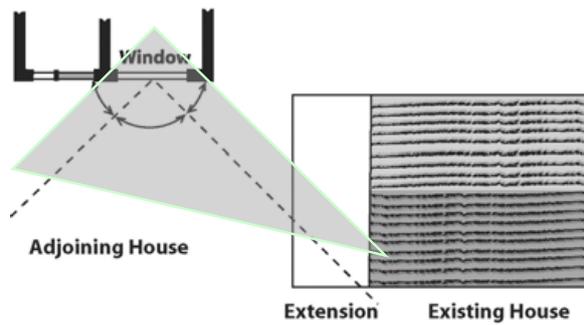


Extension acceptable provided it is limited in depth as shown below

### Example 2

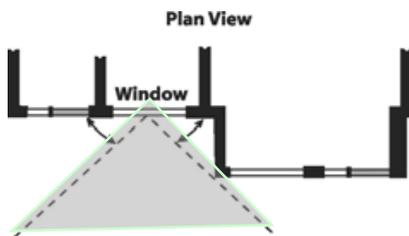
Single and two storey side extension  
Detached House

#### Plan View

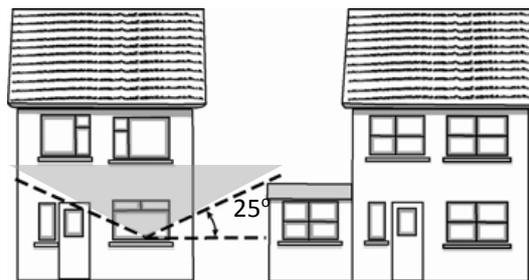


Although projecting slightly beyond the 45° line the extension is acceptable provided it is single storey as shown below

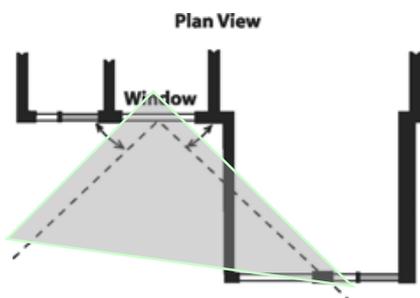
#### Rear View



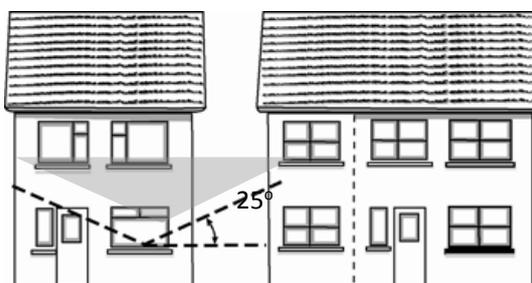
Extension acceptable up to the 45° line



Single storey extension acceptable as below the 25° line



Extension unacceptable as it projects well beyond the 45° line



Two storey extension unacceptable as it is above the 25° line

Taken from images produced by Denbighshire County Council

6.5 - Two storey extensions should not normally be within 2 metres of a boundary that forms a party wall between terraced and semi-detached properties, and 1 metre of other properties. (Occasionally the only way properties can be extended is by building at the side up to the boundary, but this must be visually relieved by setting back the façade and/or lowering the ridge height.)

### **Attic and roof extensions**

6.6 - If the roofspace has sufficient height to allow for standing then light may be obtained by means of rooflights, but otherwise the only physically practical answer may be to use sizeable dormer windows, which may well be unacceptable to the Council because they often detrimentally affect the character of the building and area. Where small gables are a local feature they may provide an acceptable design solution. Roof alterations and dormer windows should normally be kept as small as possible, and should not project above the ridge line of the property. Dormer windows should not occupy more than 40% of the area of the roof slope and must be recessed in from the sides by at least 750mm. Sloping rooflights are cheaper to install than dormer windows and less intrusive, and are also likely to avoid or reduce overlooking. If the attic or loft conversion is to be used as a habitable room (e.g. a bedroom), the stair access should not be from an existing habitable room.

### **Annexes and dependant relatives' accommodation (“granny flats”)**

6.7 - A residential annex is accommodation ancillary to the main dwelling within the residential curtilage and must be used for this purpose. It is acknowledged that an extension of the house or conversion of an outbuilding may provide an opportunity to accommodate elderly or sick relatives, or older teenagers, in the curtilage of the main dwelling whilst giving them some degree of independence. However, the annex (or “granny flat”) should form part of the same “planning unit” (by sharing the same access, parking area and garden) because the Council will wish to avoid the annex becoming a self contained dwelling thereby resulting in the creation of two separate dwellings, and it will attach conditions to prevent this occurring. (If the applicants wish is to separate off part of their curtilage to form a new planning unit then there may be an acceptable way of doing so in built-up areas, and this should be discussed with Planning Services staff, but not in the open countryside where new dwellings are not normally allowed.) The layout, design and physical relationship between the house and the proposed annex will be important considerations for the Council in deciding such planning applications, as will the size and scale of the accommodation to be provided. It is unlikely that a large annex would receive permission. As a guide, the scale should be such that the annex could be used as part of the main dwelling once the dependency need has ceased.

However, the use of rooflights should be carefully considered, especially on historic buildings as they can emit light pollution and can alter the character and appearance of some buildings.

## Appendix 1: Key UDP Policies:

### **HSG12 House Extensions and Alterations**

Extensions or alterations to existing dwellings will be permitted provided that the proposal:

- a. is subsidiary in scale and form to the existing dwelling, and does not represent an overdevelopment of the site;
- b. respects the design and setting of the existing dwelling and surrounding area; and
- c. will not have an unacceptable impact on people living nearby.

### **HSG13 Annex Accommodation**

Annex accommodation will only be permitted where:

- a. it is created by an extension to an existing dwelling;
- b. or, is a conversion of an existing building within the curtilage of a dwelling; and
- c. its usage is ancillary to the residential use of the existing dwelling.

### **D1 Design Quality, Location and Layout**

All development must incorporate good standards of design. Development will be permitted only if:

- a. it respects the scale of surrounding development, its location, siting, and layout make the best use of land, minimise the need to travel, and provide a safe and attractive environment;
- b. it is of the highest net density appropriate to its setting and function;
- c. it relates well to local topography, aspect, microclimate, street pattern, orientation and views;
- d. it creates positive and attractive building alignments and frontages;
- e. adequate provision is made for space around buildings, setting of buildings, imaginative parking and landscaping solutions;
- f. maximises the efficient use of resources, minimises the use of non renewable resources and minimises the generation of waste and pollution; and
- g. it is accompanied by design information commensurate with the scale and type of development proposed.

### **D2 Design**

Development will be permitted only where:

- a. the proposed building and structures are of a good standard of design, form, scale and materials; and
- b. it protects the character and amenity of the locality and adds to the quality and distinctiveness of the local area.

## Appendix 2

Supplementary Planning Guidance Note (SPGN) Public Consultation, (Dec 18th 2015 and Feb 12<sup>th</sup> 2016) comments and responses to SPGN No 1 Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings.

Commenting Body/ individual	Comment	Response	Recommendation
<b>No 1 Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings</b>			
<b>Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB JAC</b>	The committee fully supports and endorses section 4 relating to additional special considerations and the need for particular care in sensitive areas such as the AONB.	Noted	No change