

Roof Extensions Design Guide

Please note that under the '**Will I Need Consent? Planning Permission**' section of this document, there have been changes in legislation which mean that some of this information has been superseded. You are strongly advised to contact the Planning Department to check whether your proposed works require Planning Permission before you embark on any roof extension project.

The City Council website gives details of how to contact the Planning Department or the Duty Planning Officer for advice

<http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/planning-and-building-control/planning/pre-application-and-planning-advice/>.

Cambridge City Council

Roof Extensions Design Guide



INTRODUCTION

The City Council first produced a Roof Extension Design Guide in January 2001. It was agreed at that time that the guidance would be regularly reviewed in the light of experience and of the need for it to be kept up to date. This revised Guide has been the subject of consultation with local residents and other interested groups. It has been approved by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for roof extensions.

THE NEED FOR A GUIDE

In Cambridge the supply of housing is limited and house prices are high. Increasingly, people are looking to meet their needs for additional accommodation by extending their existing houses, rather than moving elsewhere. Roof extensions are a popular way of providing more accommodation.

Roof extensions, however, can pose a considerable design challenge both architecturally and structurally. In the past, Cambridge has seen many of its rooflines spoilt by inappropriate development, some of which has been carried out without the need for planning permission. This Guide aims to strike the right balance between the needs of the individual householder and the importance of maintaining and improving Cambridge's unique environment.

We wish to encourage householders, designers and architects to seek to extend houses so as to create attractive and interesting solutions which will enhance the domestic architecture of the City.



Jeremy Blake

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

This Guide aims to provide general design principles for the design of the most common forms of roof extension. It seeks to promote good quality design appropriate to its setting and context. It aims to adopt a flexible approach, encouraging innovation and creativity amongst designers. The Guide is appropriate for roof developments in all parts of the City, whether in a Conservation Area or outside.

Massing and Proportion

Roof extensions should relate well to the proportions, roof form and massing of the existing house and neighbouring properties. They must be appropriate in size, scale and proportion to the existing house and adjoining properties and must not be so large as to over dominate the existing roof or to overwhelm their immediate setting. New roof extensions will be expected to relate well to existing local roof forms: this does not necessarily mean copying existing forms, as innovative design of high quality is to be welcomed.

Proposals for roof extensions which perpetuate forms of existing, but poorly designed roof extensions in particular, insensitively designed large 'box type' roof extensions which show little respect for the existing roofline or for the scale, design and proportions of the existing property and its neighbours – are extremely unlikely to be acceptable.

Materials and detailing

The choice of materials should reflect or complement the character of the existing roof, the rest of the property and the immediate area. Materials which are appropriate for the age and style of the existing property will usually be the most appropriate. However, there may be circumstances in which complementary contrasting materials may be acceptable, particularly where a more innovative or unconventional design approach is being taken. Whatever the approach, materials must be of high quality.

Where appropriate the designer should use details reflecting those of the main house to add character to the roof extension. Features of the existing building, such as chimneys and parapet walls, should not be removed or hidden by the new extension where these are a key part of the architecture and their removal would be to the detriment of the overall design. Make sure that rain water goods and soil and vent pipes are properly integrated and do not disfigure the building.

Windows

The style of windows to be used in the roof extension should be influenced by the design, proportion and arrangement of existing windows in the building. The alignment and arrangement of new windows should also be considered and their relationship with the existing windows treated carefully. A less regulated approach to window design may be acceptable for more innovative or unconventional extensions, provided that they maintain or enhance the character of the existing building and the surrounding area. The visual impact of rooflights can often be reduced by using types which lie flush with the roof slope. The requirements of Building Regulations are also an important consideration as windows and rooflights are often used as means of escape.

Impact on the roof

The ridge line, especially of terraced properties or groups of similar buildings, is an important part of the character of houses and streets. Roof extensions which raise the height of the ridge will normally be resisted unless the street already lacks uniform roof heights or the ridge of the roof is not visible from the street. In exceptional cases it may be appropriate to project above the ridge, when it can be demonstrated that this would create a feature which enhances the streetscene.

Overlooking and loss of privacy

Roof extensions which give rise to significant additional overlooking of neighbouring property will be resisted. In assessing the degree of overlooking, factors such as the size, scale and orientation of the existing house, extent of existing outbuildings and garden curtilage will be taken into account.

Roof extensions which incorporate high-level roof terraces or other areas capable of being used for sitting out will normally be resisted unless they are designed to address the potential for overlooking.



JGP Architects

Environmental impact and energy saving

The City Council is keen to support development which minimises environmental impact. The use of sustainable materials which are appropriate to their context and designs which take advantage of passive or active solar energy are therefore encouraged.

COMMON FORMS OF ROOF EXTENSION

The following section offers general advice in relation to a number of common scenarios:

Front roof slope

Roof extensions located on front roof slopes facing roads always require planning permission. The Development Plan contains policies which not only address the impact of development on the specific site and its surroundings, but also consider the impact on the townscape.

The design principles contained in this Guide are particularly important in relation to roof extensions in such prominent locations. A key consideration will be the nature of the form and appearance of the existing roofscape.

New roof extensions on highly visible and unaltered roof planes will generally be resisted. Front roof extensions may be acceptable where front roof planes have already been altered sensitively, or where the rhythm of the existing roof planes is less regular.

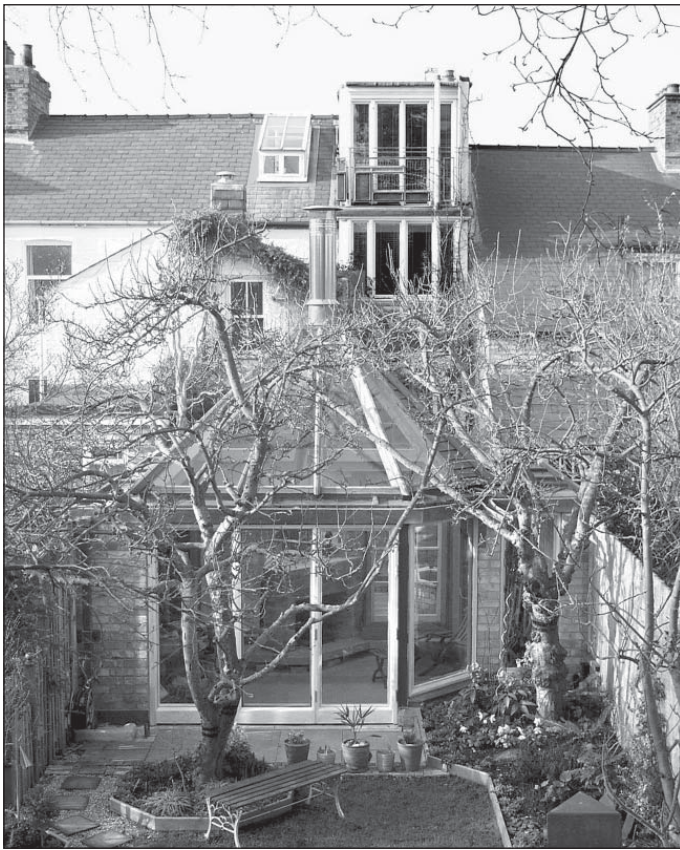
Rear roof slope – visible in public realm

The degree of visibility of the rear roof slope varies considerably; however it is common for rear elevations of houses to be visible from areas of public open space, public roads and car parks. As a general rule, the more visible a roof is from public areas, the more important it will be for it to be well designed and therefore in accordance with this Guide. The degree of public visibility will influence the assessment of impact in each case.

Rear roof extensions which are not highly visible from public areas will be assessed on the basis of their impact on the house and its immediate surroundings.

Rear roof slope – only visible from other gardens

Rear roof slopes which are only visible from surrounding gardens still matter, since these have an impact on the amenity of the neighbouring houses. It is just as important for such roof extensions to relate well to the proportions, roof forms and massing of the existing house and its neighbours as elsewhere. However, in these circumstances a more flexible approach may be acceptable, depending on the individual circumstances. There may be situations in which extensions to the rear roof slope of a less conventional style are appropriate.



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WILL I NEED CONSENT?

Planning Permission

This will be needed for a roof extension if:

- Your property is in a Conservation Area.
- Any part of the roof extension exceeds the highest part of the existing roof of the house.
- The elevation on which the extension is to be built faces a highway (including public footpaths).
- The extension is larger than 40 cubic metres on a terraced house, or 50 cubic metres on any other house.
- Your property has any other extensions, including freestanding buildings within 5 metres of the house, which together with the proposed extension would increase the size of the original terraced house by 50 cubic metres or 10% (whichever is greater), or would increase the size of any other type of house by 70 cubic metres or 15% (whichever is the greater). The maximum volume of permitted extensions is 115 cubic metres.
- The property has been subdivided into smaller units such as flats.

Side roof slope

Dormer windows to the side elevations of hipped roofed semi-detached houses are common and often combined with rear roof extensions. Roof extensions of this type are usually visible from the public highway and therefore have the capacity to affect the townscape. There is a potential for this type of roof extension to upset the balanced appearance of semi-detached houses.

Therefore if there is an opportunity to carry out a joint scheme with your neighbour, it should be taken. In order to minimise this impact, it is recommended that side dormers should be of minimum size and should be designed to retain the eaves line so as not to compromise the ridge line of the hipped roof.

Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings

Planning permission is required for all roof extensions in Conservation Areas. In Conservation Areas the character of the area as a whole is protected by planning policies. These policies have to be taken into account alongside the advice contained in this Guide when determining applications.

Listed building consent is required for all roof extensions to Listed Buildings whether or not they involve external alterations to the building.

Building Regulations Approval

All loft conversions require Building Regulations approval. A guidance note covering the requirements of the building regulations can be obtained from the Building Control Section on the second floor of the Guildhall or by visiting the Building Control Website at: www.cambridge.gov.uk/planning/buildcon.

Listed Building Consent

If your house is a 'Listed Building', Listed Building Consent will be needed for any rooflight, roof extension or dormer window of any size whether or not it is on the front, back or side of the property. Loft extensions which involve no external alterations will also need Listed Building Consent.

Please remember that you may need more than one type of approval. For example, a dormer window facing the highway on a Listed Building will need Planning Permission, Listed Building Consent and Building Regulations Approval.

Party Wall Agreement

If you carry out work to the party wall, your attention is drawn to the legal requirements of the Party Wall Act 1996. The Party Wall Act is not administered by the City Council, but a leaflet can be obtained from the Environment and Planning Department or on the Government website at www.construction.dltr.gov.uk/bregs.



5th Studio

BEFORE YOU APPLY

Before you make your application we recommend that you ask yourself three important questions.

Does the structure of the roof allow it to be converted?

Modern 'trussed rafter' roofs or very low-pitched roofs are very difficult to convert and provide very little usable space. If your only option is to significantly raise the height of your roof or to build a very large dormer to provide adequate head height, there is a strong possibility that your proposals will not accord with this guidance.

Can additional accommodation be created by extending your house in another way?

There may be a number of ways in which you could alter or extend your house, which would provide for additional accommodation. Roof conversions/extensions can be complex and may involve significant internal alterations. You should explore all your options and remember that planning officers are able to provide advice on the likelihood of planning permission being granted for alternative proposals.

Does your roof extension accord with the Design Guide?

The contents of this Guide are a determining factor in the assessment of planning applications and other applications for roof extensions. The Guide is intended to provide clear advice to enable you to know whether your proposals are likely to be supported. If your proposals are contrary to the advice contained in the Guide then the likelihood is that planning permission will be refused. Planning officers are available to advise you whether your proposals accord with the design guidance. They can be contacted in person at the Guildhall, by telephone and by E-mail; contact details are given below.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

If you need to submit a planning application/application for Listed Building Consent you can obtain application forms from the Environment and Planning Department or from the Council's web site. Your application will be assessed by a planning officer who will visit your property. Householder applications are normally decided by officers under powers delegated to them by the Planning Committee. However if you wish the Committee to consider your application, your Local Councillor may be willing to support such a request.

Once your application is approved you must build your roof extension in accordance with the approved plans unless a formal written agreement is obtained from the City Council for amended plans.

WHERE TO GET ADVICE

Planning advice can be obtained from planning officers at the Guildhall. There is no charge for this service and no need to make an appointment. Building Control Surveyors are also available to offer advice on Building Regulations Approval.

If your proposals involve a Listed Building and/or development in the Conservation Area you should contact the Conservation and Design Team for advice.

**Environment and Planning Department
Cambridge City Council
The Guildhall, Cambridge CB2 3QJ**

Hours of opening:

9am - 5pm Monday - Thursday; 9am - 4.30pm Friday

This document is available in large print.

Tel: 01223 457200 Fax: 01223 457109

Minicom: 01223 457050

Email: planning@cambridge.gov.uk

www.cambridge.gov.uk/planning/planhome.htm

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