Introduction

When you extend your house you should protect its character and that of the area in which you live. Poorly designed extensions and alterations can spoil the look of a house or area. A well designed extension should look as if it belongs with the house. The Council's Local Plan specifically calls for good quality design.

Note: Extra care should be taken with design when extending houses that are listed buildings, within conservation areas or in the open countryside.

Extension Types

The type of extension will depend on its use and the design of the existing house. Side extensions are often the best solution. However, a well designed extension can often look inappropriate and should be avoided. Rear extensions can create problems with overlooking and loss of light to nearby properties if they are too big.

Want to extend your house? Many people extend their house to create more space rather than move home. This leaflet shows how to extend your house whilst maintaining good design.
| Roofs |

It is important that the roof of the extension is a similar pitch and design to the existing house. Two storey flat roofs must always be avoided, and flat roofs generally need regular maintenance and have a limited life. We usually recommend dropping the roof height of the extension so that it is lower than the existing house on two storey extensions.

Some roofs can be converted to living space but this can drastically affect the look of the house. The most common way of getting this space and light is to build a dormer. If used, dormers should be at the back, small and not extend above the ridge, beyond the line of the hipped roof, or down to the eaves level, and their roofs should match the style of the existing roof.
Doors and Windows

Windows and doors form an important part of the character of a house. New doors and windows in the extension should have the same style, size, materials and appearance of those of the original building.
Protecting Neighbours

The effect of an extension on neighbours must be considered at the outset. A neighbour's enjoyment of light and privacy should not be unreasonably affected. Large extensions can dominate a neighbour's outlook and be oppressive. Instead the following guidelines should be used, particularly where large extensions adjacent to plot boundaries are proposed:

The minimum distance between facing windows of habitable rooms in neighbouring properties shall be 22 metres. The minimum distance between a window of a habitable room and a blank wall or a gable wall containing obscure glazed windows of non habitable rooms should be normally be 12 metres.

Windows which directly overlook neighbouring properties should be avoided. Exceptions may be made for obscurely glazed and unopened windows such as in bathrooms or on landings. Where a ground floor window is permitted which directly faces adjacent property, the top of the window shall not be above the adjacent side boundary wall or fence, in order to avoid any potential overlooking.

Single storey extensions should be contained within the area formed by a line drawn at 60° from the centre of the nearest adjoining window of a habitable room either side of the property. Two storey extensions shall not extend beyond the area formed by a line drawn at 45° from the centre of the nearest adjoining window of a habitable room on either side of the property.
As well as good design, it is essential that the extension is constructed from materials of the same type, colour and texture as those of the main house. Many older properties have decorative brick detailing particularly around eaves, windows and doors. They should be kept wherever possible and copied in any extension. Unless your house is already rendered it would be the wrong material to use when building an extension, the same applies to stone cladding.

Sometimes it will be difficult to match materials which have been heavily weathered or are no longer available. If so, it is recommended that the extension should be set back slightly from the wall of the most prominent elevation. This will disguise the joins between materials of the house and extension.
Do I need Permission?

Your extension may need planning permission. This will depend on its size and position, whether there have been other extensions and if your house is in a Conservation Area. If you are proposing to extend or alter in any way a Listed Building, either externally or internally then Listed Building Consent will also be required in addition to any planning permission.

It is recommended that you contact the Planning Department for an informal discussion about your extension before you draw up plans or start work. In drawing up of extension plans it is advisable to seek professional advice.