Purpose of report
This report seeks Members’ approval to undertake a consultation upon a guidance document on householder extensions with a view to ultimately adopting it as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Some of the design principles in it can also be applied to situations where extensions are being constructed under ‘Permitted Development Rights’ if the property owner wishes to have some guidance at that time.

Attachment(s)

1.0 Background

1.1 The Council currently has a Design Guide on residential extensions and alterations which is used in the consideration of planning applications and in giving pre-application advice. This was originally adopted on 14th October 1998 and, other than a change to the cover in November 2008, has not been updated since then.

1.2 Since the document was adopted, various new national and local planning documents have come into force and others have been superseded. The most recent new documents include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) February 2019, the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2016), the Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan (2011) and various Neighbourhood Plan for individual towns or villages (accepted as ‘made’ between 2016 and 2019).

1.3 The current Design Guide is considered to be in need of updating to take account of these more recent documents.

1.4 In addition, the existing document concentrates on visual appearance and impact on neighbouring amenity document whereas there are a growing number of extra topics which are relevant to extensions and which need taking into account in the determination of planning applications. These include minimum bedroom sizes, garden lengths, implications for trees, dimensions for garages and car parking standards. The draft document that is the subject of this Report also takes account of these topics.

1.5 An initial version of this draft SPD has already been the subject of consultation with colleagues in the Council’s Development Management Team and a number of amendments have been made in response to views they have made. It is now considered appropriate to release the document to a wider audience to hear what views they have to say.

2.0 Topics covered

2.1 The SPD contains 6 sections covering the following:

• Design in relation to the existing dwelling;
• How an extension fits in with the character of its surroundings;
• Impact on the amenity of adjacent properties;
• Implications for off road parking provision at the property;
• Whether sufficient outside amenity space will remain within the curtilage of the property when the works are in place; and
• If there are any important trees which are affected by the works.

2.2 The first of these sections details some overarching principles for design and then gives specific guidance for front, side, rear and roof extensions plus advice on listed buildings, minimum garage dimensions and bedroom sizes.

2.3 The next considers common characteristics in the surrounding area such as roof shapes, window styles, materials and spacing between properties with the aim they are taken into account in designing extensions. It also makes it clear that the impact on any heritage assets needs to be considered.

2.4 The third section gives general advice on measures to be taken so as to ensure there are no significant issues of overlooking, loss of light or dominance from extensions. Reference is also made to the Party Wall Act which, whilst not a planning consideration, also needs to be taken into account in designing extensions as it can prevent them being built if not complied with.

2.5 The fourth recognises the importance of off road parking provision at properties. It seeks to ensure that sufficient parking provision is left when extensions are built and any additional parking provision that is justified by extra bedrooms is provided.

2.6 The fifth section aims to ensure that housing plots do not become over developed when extensions are built. Some guidance is given on ideal garden lengths and areas that should remain when they are built.

2.7 The final section seeks to ensure that the design of any extension takes on board the guidance in the relevant British Standard to ensure any trees in the vicinity of the extension that are worthy of retention are given sufficient protection during building works.

2.8 Overall, the draft document is considered to take account of the relevant new documents that have come into force since the last one was adopted and it also gives guidance on extra topics which are common considerations in relation to planning applications.

3.0 Conclusion

3.1 This report is presented to Members, as the first stage in the process of “upgrading” the draft to a statutory Supplementary Planning Document. It is therefore requested that Members approve the draft document for consultation as a draft SPD.

3.2 The consultation will take place over 6 weeks and this period should begin as soon as possible. The aim is the outcome will then be reported back to Members in due course with some further recommendations to consider in the light of it. It is then proposed to adopt the SPD prior to the formation of the new North Northamptonshire Council so that it can be used to help secure acceptable residential extensions for the East Northamptonshire area until such a time as any guidance is adopted for the whole of the area covered by the new Unitary Council.

4.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

4.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from the proposals.

5.0 Privacy Implications

5.1 There are no privacy implications arising from the proposals.
6.0 Health Implications

6.1 Many aspects of planning have implications for public health. This document includes various guidelines to be used in determining planning applications. Many of these, such as ensuring no adverse impact on light and minimum bedrooms sizes, have the aim of ensuring decisions do not have an adverse impact people’s quality of life and therefore their health.

7.0 Legal Implications

7.1 Preparation and adoption of Supplementary Planning Documents must be undertaken in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012; Regulations 11-16 and 35. Otherwise, there are no legal implications arising from the proposals.

8.0 Risk Management

8.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report. The progression of this document to the stage of being adopted will mean it will help give consistency in determining Planning Applications.

9.0 Resource and Financial Implications

9.1 There are no significant resource or financial implications arising from the proposals. Most of the versions of the document will be in electronic format and they can be prepared in house.

10.0 Constitutional Implications

10.1 Day to day matters of Planning Policy, such as the preparation and adoption of Supplementary Planning Documents, have already been delegated to the Planning Policy Committee. As such, there are no constitutional implications arising from the proposals.

11.0 Implications for customers

11.1 The document will be available to customers of the Council and will help them understand the planning process. It will also help with consistency in planning decisions and ensuring all customers are treated the same.

12.0 Corporate Outcomes

12.1 The relevant Corporate Outcomes are:

- Good Quality of Life – Delivery of regeneration, economic development, sustainable development and strong communities
- Effective Partnership Working – The preparation of the SPD will include a consultation process to seek views of stakeholders
- Strong community leadership – Helping with consistency in planning decisions and securing acceptable designs for extensions.

13.0 Recommendation

13.1 The Committee is recommended to:

(1) Approve the Draft Householder Extensions SPD as detailed in Appendix 1 as the basis for consultation.

(Reason – To ensure planning policy is up to date and relevant)
| Legal | Power: Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004  
Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012; Regulations 11-16 and 35 |
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**Date:** 13 January 2020
Householder Extensions Supplementary Planning Document.

Purpose of this document.

This document has been prepared by East Northamptonshire Council primarily to provide guidance on extensions to residential properties in situations where they require Planning Permission. However, some of the design principles in it can also be applied to situations where extensions are being constructed under ‘Permitted Development Rights’ if the property owner wishes to have some guidance at that time.

It is aimed at agents and residents to help when designing extensions. It will also be used by Planning Officers in assessing applications. It is proposed that it will supplement Policies 2 and 8 of the adopted North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and those within Neighbourhood Plans all of which are currently a consideration in determining applications for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent.

At the time of preparing this document the ‘made’ Neighbourhood Plans which contain design Policies to consider in relation to extensions are as follows: Barrowden and Wakerley (BW6), Brigstock (Policy B16), Glatthorn (Policy 10), King’s Cliffe (Policies BE1 and BE2), Higham Ferrers (Policies HF.DE1 and HF.DE2), Raunds (Policy R2), Rushden (Policy EN1), Stanwick (Policies HTG1, HTG2 and HTG3) and Warmington (W3).

Detailed considerations.

When considering applications for extensions to residential properties, the Council will look at six main issues:

- The design in relation to the existing dwelling.
- How an extension fits in with the character of its surroundings.
- Impact on the amenity of adjacent properties.
- Implications for off road parking provision at the property.
- Whether sufficient outside amenity space will remain within the curtilage of the property when the works are in place.
- If there are any important trees which are affected by the works.
1. The design in relation to the existing dwelling

Overarching principles.

1.1 In general terms, the size of any extension, the materials, the design of the roof and the style and proportions of the windows and doors should complement the existing property.

Front extensions.

1.2 Front extensions should normally only be single storey and should be in proportion to the original house so they do not extend too far forwards or be too dominant at the front of the property. The roof design should complement the existing dwelling and, normally, be pitched rather than flat.

1.3 Generally, a two storey front extension will only be acceptable if it relates to a detached property in large grounds. In other circumstances, they are often too dominant in the surroundings or they negatively affect the appearance of a terrace or pair of semi detached properties.

Side extensions

1.4 A side extension is usually set back from the front of a house to maintain the proportions of the original dwelling and to avoid difficulties in matching new bricks and tiles with old ones. In addition, a side extension that is not set back from the front wall can adversely affect the symmetry of a pair of semi detached properties. A set back of 1 metre is usually appropriate in an urban context unless specific requirements suggest less (such as internal stair arrangements). Set backs can also help avoid a terraced effect being created in a street where this is not a common characteristic. For the same reason, it is advisable to leave a 1 metre gap to the side boundary. This will also allow continued access from the front of the property to the rear for items such as wheelie bins. In addition, to help keep it in proportion with the original dwelling, as a general rule, a single storey side extension should not be wider than 2/3 of the width of the front wall when it was originally built and a two storey side extension should be no more than 1/2 the width.

1.5 Side extensions should also have pitched roofs. The angle of the roof should be the same as, or close to, the angle of the existing roof. They should be no higher than the existing roof and, generally, slightly lower so as to help maintain the proportions of the original dwelling and to help retain the symmetry in a semi detached pair. (See illustration below which shows the front view of an extension in relation to the existing house).
Implications for garages

1.6 It is quite common for a side extension, and occasionally front extensions, to include a garage. Where a garage is involved and it faces the highway, the front should be at least 5.5 metres from the highway boundary to allow for a vehicle to park in front of it whilst the garage door is being opened without overhanging the footpath or road. Where a garage door faces a side boundary, the 5.5 metre gap should be increased to at least 6 metres in this direction to allow enough room for satisfactory manoeuvring into the garage.

1.7 Garages will need to comply with the minimum sizes recommended in the Countywide parking standards which were adopted by the Northamptonshire County Council on 6th September 2016. These state single garages should be 3.3 metres wide by 6.0 metres long and a double garage should be at least 5.8 metres wide by 6.0 metres long. (These measurements should be taken internally). A full copy of this document can be viewed via the following link: https://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/northamptonshire-highways/transport-plans-and-policies/Pages/northamptonshire-parking-standards.aspx

Rear extensions

1.8 Rear extensions should be designed so they are in proportion when compared to the depth of the original dwelling. To remain in proportion, the aim should be that they are not longer than this depth. They should also be equal in height or lower when related to the original house. Flat roofs should be avoided wherever possible both in appearance terms and because they are more of a maintenance liability than pitched ones.

Roof extensions

1.9 Extensions to the roof space may involve adding dormers to the property. Dormer windows should be of a similar size or be smaller than the windows below them. Flat roofed dormers should generally be avoided. They should be set well into the roof and not rise above the highest part of the roof. Any other alterations to the shape of the roof should respect the original design and not be too dominant in the surroundings.

National Space Standards

1.10 In all extensions, in designing any new bedrooms or making existing ones smaller to allow access through to other rooms, it is recommended that the minimum sizes specified in the document entitled ‘Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard’ (Department of Communities and Local Government, March 2015) are utilised. These specify that a single bedroom should have a floor area of at least 7.5 m² and a width of at least 2.15 metres and a double bedroom should have a floor area of at least 11.5m². A full copy of this document can be viewed via https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-housing-standards-nationally-described-space-standard
Listed buildings

1.11 There are also additional considerations if a property is a Listed Building or a locally designated heritage asset. You will need to make particularly sure that any design and materials are sympathetic to the original building.

1.12 Care is needed with conservatories to ensure any materials which differ from those on the existing property are in keeping with it. In addition, works to the historic fabric of the property to allow access to any extensions should be kept to a minimum.

1.13 Listed Building Consent is also required for extensions and related works to Listed Buildings. Applications of this nature will require more technical detail about the works than Planning Applications. Examples of the extra information that is needed include details of the proposed mortar mix and cross sections through windows.

2. How an extension fits in with the character of the surroundings.

2.1 An extension should be designed taking account of the characteristics in the surroundings.

2.2 You should consider items such common roof shapes, window types/sizes, materials and the spacing between properties and try and respect these in the design of the extension.

2.3 If the surroundings are characterised by having a lot of trees or boundary walls of a particular style, the works should be designed so as to retain these as much as possible.

Setting of heritage assets

2.4 If any of the adjacent properties is a Listed Building or locally designated heritage asset, any extension will need to be designed and located so that it does not have a significant impact on the setting of such a property.

3. Impact on the amenity of adjacent properties.

3.1 The first consideration is whether an extension will be too dominant in terms of the impact on neighbouring properties. To avoid this, extensions should not be too tall when they are close to adjacent properties and they should be set in slightly from the boundary line. It is best practice that a gap of at least 1 metre is retained as this will not only reduce the impact on neighbours but it will allow access for maintenance of side walls and guttering without having to go onto adjacent properties.

3.2 Roofs will ideally be designed to slope down towards the boundary to help minimise any impact unless the surrounding situation means this this not necessary or such an approach would not be acceptable in the context of the design of the existing building.

3.3 In considering extensions in close proximity to boundaries, regard also has to be had to the Party Wall Act 1996. This is a separate issue to the matters which need to be taken into account in determining Planning Applications but needs to be taken into account when designing extensions as it imposes controls on how works can take place on and in close proximity to boundaries. Details are available via the following link: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/40/contents? ga=2.67764433.1701432371.1566911961-111181719.1473333911.
3.4 It is important that an extension does not have a significant impact on the amount of light received in adjacent dwellings. With this in mind, extensions which have a side wall or roof of less than 3 metres tall should not project beyond a line drawn at 60 degrees from the middle of the nearest front or rear facing ground floor window of a habitable room of an adjacent property. (See illustration below which shows views of extensions from above). Habitable rooms include kitchens, living rooms (lounges), dining rooms and bedrooms but exclude bathrooms, toilets, halls, landings and store rooms.

3.5 As their impact is potentially greater, where there is a side wall or roof higher than 3 metres, this part of the extension should not extend beyond a line taken at 45 degrees from the middle of the closest front or rear facing ground floor windows to habitable rooms in the adjacent property. (See illustration below which shows views of extensions from above).

![Diagram of extension with side wall of less than 3 metres tall](image1)

![Diagram of extension with side wall of more than 3 metres tall](image2)

3.4 Sometimes an extension will be proposed to be built where there are side facing windows in the closest adjacent property. If it is established that any windows of this nature serve a habitable room and are the main window serving it, the design of the extension needs to ensure that it still receives sufficient light taking account of the impact that any side boundary treatment already has.

3.5 The other consideration is whether there will be any significant increase in overlooking towards both windows and gardens of adjacent properties compared to the current situation. With this in mind, careful consideration needs to be given to the placing of any new windows to avoid this.

3.6 At ground floor level, side facing windows are only likely to be acceptable if, when properties are at the same level, they face either a tall boundary treatment (at least 1.8
metres tall) which prevents overlooking or, where the boundary height is less, a blank side wall in an adjacent property.

3.7 As they offer more potential for overlooking, any side facing windows above ground floor level which are less than 7 metres from the side boundary should either have a minimum sill height of 1.7 metres above the finished floor level or be obscure glazed and non-opening up to this height.

3.8 The positioning of rear facing windows should take account of windows in the existing property, boundary treatments and ground levels to ensure they do not result in a significant increase in overlooking towards an adjacent property when compared to the situation before any extensions are built.

3.9 In addition, unless properties are already in closer proximity, any new windows at first floor level or above should respect the ‘back to back’ distance of at least 21 metres between directly facing rear windows which has become accepted in the discipline of planning over the years as being sufficient to avoid unacceptable overlooking into the windows of properties to the rear. Where properties with directly facing windows are already less than 21 metres apart, a judgement will be made as to whether the extension results in a significantly worse situation in terms of overlooking than that which already exists. Finally, where rear facing windows are at an angle to each other, a shorter distance between dwellings may be possible if the case officer is satisfied that the angle involved reduces the amount of overlooking between them sufficiently to protect the privacy of residents in both properties.

3.10 Dependent on garden arrangements, some extensions will present a building mass tight to the end of a neighbour’s garden. This can be obtrusive. In such situations these will be resisted where it is two storey and within 15 metres of the rear windows of the affected property.

4. Implications for off road parking provision at the property.

4.1 If an extension results in the loss of off road parking provision at a property, it will need to be shown that there will still be sufficient provision for vehicles on site in line with the current Countywide parking standards. An exception to this can be where a property is in a town centre location where access to public transport and facilities are within easy reach.

4.2 At the time of preparing this document, these are the Standards adopted by the County Council on 6th September 2016. These specify that a 1 bedroomed property should have one parking space, two and three bedroomed properties should have 2 spaces and those with 4 or more bedrooms should have 3 spaces. A copy of this document can be viewed via https://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/northamptonshire-highways/transport-plans-and-policies/Pages/northamptonshire-parking-standards.aspx.

4.3 These are minimum standards and so, if a property can have more provision, this will be welcomed. In calculating how many bedrooms a property has, any existing ones which are too small to comply with the national space standards referred to in the design section above will not be counted.
4.4 In addition, if an extension results in the number of bedrooms increasing at a property, it needs to be ensured that adequate provision is made to comply with the Standards set out in paragraph 4.2 above.

4.5 The County Council’s Standards specify each outside parking space should be 3 metres wide by 5.5 metres long. If they are in a garage, they also state a single garage it needs to be at least 3.3 metres wide by 6.0 metres long and a double garage should be at least 5.8 metres wide by 6.0 metres long. (These measurements should be taken internally).

5. Whether sufficient outside amenity space will be left at the property when the works are in place.

5.1 It is important that residential plots do not become over developed and it will need to be ensured that a property will retain sufficient, useable private outside amenity space once an extension is in place.

5.2 As a guide, a typical rear garden is 10.5 metres long, which ties in with the 21 metre ‘back to back’ distance referred to in the amenity section above. In such circumstances, it is recommended to ask for at least 50 square metres of garden to be retained as a reasonable amount of useable amenity space taking account of the extension and any other outbuildings in the garden. This will vary depending how large a garden the properties in the vicinity originally had when they were built. Ideally, this should result in a garden being 7 metres long for a property of two storeys or above or 5 metres for a bungalow. However, in some cases, if these distances cannot be achieved and the property has a very wide rear garden, this width could also provide sufficient amenity space.

6. If there are any important trees which are affected by the works.

6.1 In addition, to the general point identified above about whether the surroundings have a wooded character which needs to be retained, it is also important to consider any individual trees or groups of trees which could be affected by the development and which need to be safeguarded. These include trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders, trees in Conservation Areas or trees without protected status but are considered to be of value to the immediate locality. Whether a tree falls into the final one of these categories will be determined by the case officer for the application in discussion with the Council’s Tree and Landscape Officer.

6.2 In finalising the design of any extension, the safeguarding of trees of this nature will need to be taken into account. Where any extension is to be built in close proximity to trees of this nature, the works need to be designed in line with BS 7837:2012 entitled ‘Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – recommendations’.