



Torfaen Local Development Plan

# **House Extension and Alterations Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)**

December 2022

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# 1. Introduction

## Aims and Objectives of this Guidance

This Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) aims to provide a clear set of guidelines with appropriate illustrations of how changes to existing dwellings, such as side, rear and roof extensions, should be designed in order to secure good quality design which enhances the environmental quality of Torfaen.

This SPG has been produced to support and add detail to the 'Adopted Torfaen Local Development Plan', December 2013 (LDP) - [available on TCBC website](#). It is intended to provide clear guidance on the interpretation and implementation of the policies within the LDP which are relevant to householder development. It represents a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and appeals for householder development.

Good design means any extension should reflect or respect the design and scale of the original building and also have regard to the characteristics of the wider area. The need to achieve good quality design should be an overriding consideration for all development regardless of how prominent or accessible the site is. While site specific circumstances will need to be taken into consideration, the overall objective should be achieving good quality design.

The guidelines contained within this document will apply to all householder proposals to ensure the design and scale does not conflict with the existing dwelling, its context, or the existing standards of living conditions currently enjoyed by neighbouring properties. The guidance applies to the design of all house extensions and alterations irrespective of whether or not the proposal requires planning permission.

This SPG has been prepared as a guide to help householders when considering extending or altering their home. The document is intended for use by prospective applicants, agents, architects, members of the public with an interest in an application, elected Members of the Council and other decision-making bodies.

## Status of the Supplementary Planning Guidance

A draft version of this SPG underwent public consultation between 31<sup>st</sup> Jan - 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022; and following consideration of all comments received, was adopted at a full meeting of Torfaen Council on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022. A copy of the aforesaid 'Council Report' (inc. the Appendix of all comments received and their consideration) and a tracked changes version of the SPG, between draft and adoption, can be emailed upon request.

## 2. Planning Policy Context

### National Policy

Welsh Government's (WG) 'Future Wales: The National Plan 2040' ([WG website](#)) and 'Planning Policy Wales, Edition 11' (PPW11 - [WG website](#)) (both February 2021) set out the national policies and guidance within which the local plan policies are applied. PPW11 is supplemented by topic based Technical Advice Notes, including Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12: Design (2016) - [WG website](#).

PPW11 states 'the Welsh Government's commitment to the importance of 'places' and 'place-making'. It explains how good design is fundamental to creating sustainable places where people want to live, work and socialise and that it's not just about the architecture of a building but the relationship between all elements of the natural and built environment and between people and places.

TAN 12 seeks to promote sustainability through good design. Paragraph 2.2 states: -

*"The Welsh Government is strongly committed to achieving the delivery of good design in the built and natural environment which is fit for purpose and delivers environmental sustainability, economic development and social inclusion, at every scale throughout Wales - from householder extensions to new mixed use communities."*

### Development Plan

The Development Plan for Torfaen includes 'Future Wales: The National Plan 2040' as a new upper tier of the development plan that addresses matters of national importance, as well as the 'Adopted Torfaen Local Development Plan' at a local level.

### Torfaen Local Development Plan, December 2013

The LDP sets out the Council's following policies on design: -

- Policy S2 - gives a set of Sustainable Development criterion that should be taken into account in the design of development proposals.
- Policy S3 - provides criterion that should be considered to seek to mitigate the causes of further climate change and adapt to the current and future effects of climate change such as promoting sustainable design.
- Policy S7 - seeks to ensure that development proposals promote the conservation and enhancement of the Natural, Built and Historic Environment.

- Policy BW1 - provides a detailed Borough wide General Policy on Development Proposals with criterion covering 'Amenity and Design', the 'Natural Environment', the 'Built Environment', 'Utilities Provision' and 'Design and Transport', against which all planning applications will be determined in conjunction with other relevant policies of the Local Development Plan.
- Policy HE2 - states that development within the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site (BILWHS) will be permitted subject to several criterion, including promoting appropriate design which preserves or enhances the character of the local area, protection of key views and maintaining the 'universal value' or integrity of the BILWHS. Proposals should be informed by the guidance in the BILWHS Design Guide.
- Policy BG1 - states, subject to two criterion, development proposals will not be permitted where they would cause significant adverse effects to local nature conservation designated sites, including the features of a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) or Local Nature Reserves (LNR). Subject to updating, details of LNRs and SINC (which generally include all ancient woodlands and watercourses) can be found in Appendix 3 and 4 respectively of the adopted LDP and are shown on the associated Proposals Map.

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance:**

The **Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site (BILWHS) Design Guide SPG** sets out guidelines for development within the WHS boundaries. It aims to protect the historic character and Outstanding Universal Value of the BILWHS - [available on TCBC website](#).

**CSS Wales Parking Standards 2014** (Adopted SPG for Torfaen) sets out the parking requirements in relation to householder developments. Where additional bedrooms would be created as part of a proposal, one space per bedroom, up to a maximum of 3 spaces should be provided within the application site. Where householder proposals would result in a loss of parking spaces which would unacceptably reduce the level of parking for that dwelling below this adopted standard, alternative parking provision will be required - [available on TCBC website](#).

Other relevant SPGs are expected to be adopted in due course on 'Green Infrastructure', 'Biodiversity', etc.

## 3. Consent and Permissions required for Householder Development

### Permitted Development Rights

This guide sets out general requirements to assist those seeking planning permission but is also a useful tool to ensure the quality of design for those schemes that fall within permitted development. Not all extensions and external alterations to buildings require planning permission; some may be permitted development (i.e. development not requiring planning permission). See the Planning Portal for further information ([Planning permission: permitted development rights for householders | GOV.WALES](#)). Please be aware that permitted development rights for some dwellings have been removed or restricted as part of their original planning consent; this can be checked by contacting [planning@torfaen.gov.uk](mailto:planning@torfaen.gov.uk) with your site address details.

### Planning Application for Householder Development

When householder development is not 'permitted development', you will need to make an application for planning permission to the Council. Householder planning applications are a specific type of planning application for development involving an existing residential property. A list of what is needed to support planning applications is set out in the Check List at Appendix A. Once submitted and confirmed as being valid, neighbouring properties will be notified that an application has been submitted. A site notice may also be displayed near the property to which the application relates. Your application will be allocated to a Planning Officer who will normally visit your property, the surrounding area and, if necessary, your neighbours' properties to undertake an assessment of the site and consider the impact that the proposal will have. A valid planning application will usually be determined within 8 weeks of being received.

### Conservation Area Consent

If your property is within a Conservation Area, you may also need permission to demolish elements of your property. A particular type of permission, known as Conservation Area Consent, will also be required if your proposals involve the substantial demolition of a building or structure in a Conservation Area.

### Listed Building Consent

Listed Building Consent will also be required for most internal and external works to a Listed Building e.g. replacing windows or painting exterior walls. Listed Building Consent will also be required for the demolition of all or part of a Listed Building. For further guidance refer to the Council's website. It is a criminal offence to carry out unauthorised work to a Listed Building.

## **Building Regulations**

The majority of extensions, regardless of whether or not they require planning permission, may require Building Regulations consent. Planning permission and Building Regulations are two separate requirements. Most construction work will need to comply with Building Regulations. These include the replacement of windows, new electrical installations and renovation of a building. You can find more information and guidance by visiting the Council's website and searching for 'Building Regulations' or contacting our Building Control team.

## **Party Wall Act**

While not a material planning consideration, extensions and walls that are built right on the boundary can often cause problems. In many cases the consent of adjoining owners will be necessary. If you intend to carry out work on, or within close proximity to your neighbour's boundary or party walls, you will need to consider the requirements of the Party Wall Act 1996. This is designed to resolve disputes which may arise between neighbours when building work is carried out. The basic requirement of the Act is that you notify your neighbour in advance of the intended work. You can find more information and guidance by visiting the Government website via the following link:

[The Party Wall etc Act 1996: explanatory booklet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

## **Sewers & Services**

The effect of any development on sewers, water mains, gas pipes and electricity mains should be considered and may require separate consent from the service provider. A development must not compromise any rights of access required by service providers; and to prevent drainage misconnections, must ensure that the right connections for all surface water and foul water / plumbing are in place (further information is available at [www.connectright.org.uk](http://www.connectright.org.uk)). Similarly, the applicant should also ensure that any non mains method of foul drainage has sufficient capacity for any increase in flows because of the development proposals. The size and / or location of new development may be affected by the position of a sewer and other services; you should contact your service providers for further advice.

## **Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) / Drainage Statement**

All construction work with drainage implications, of 100m<sup>2</sup> or more (including proposed new buildings and hard run-off areas, such as driveways, patios or garden paths, etc.), are required to have SuDS to manage on-site surface water, which must be designed and constructed in accordance with the Welsh Government [Standards for Sustainable Drainage](#); and, separate from your planning application, be approved by the SuDS Approving Body (SAB) before construction work begins. Also, from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023, Welsh Government's TAN15 (paras 8.12-8.14 & Figure 4) on 'Development, Flooding and Coastal Erosion' (December 2021) will introduce a formal requirement for a 'Drainage Statement' (which outlines how it is proposed to integrate SuDS into the scheme) when the planning and SuDS approval

processes are sought separately. Even if SuDS approval is not required, to minimise surface water run-off, we recommend that water butts, filter strips, green roofs, grey water recycling and permeable paving on driveways are considered.

### **Rivers and Watercourses**

Any works in, over, under or near the Afon Llwyd and its tributary Dowlais Brook to Ton Road in Cwmbran may require a Flood Risk Activity Permit from Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru / Natural Resources Wales (CNC/NRW) prior to works being undertaken - [further details](#). Similarly, any work near or adjacent to any other named or un-named watercourses (dry or flowing) will need to be authorised by TCBC: Drainage Section under the Land Drainage Act 1991 as an Ordinary Watercourse Consent.

### **European Protected Species (EPS)**

From Section 13 on 'Biodiversity' below, you may be required to undertake surveys for European Protected Species; in which case you will need an EPS Licence from Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru / Natural Resources Wales ([further information](#)). Any surveys for protected species should be undertaken by suitably qualified, experienced and licensed surveyors in accordance with published guidance and best practice. If EPS are likely to be affected by your proposals, the planning application should include details of all the mitigation that will be put in place to offset the anticipated impacts.



## 4. Designing your Development

### Planning Pre-application Advice

The Council strongly recommends residents submit a planning pre-application enquiry before a formal planning application is submitted. Torfaen County Borough Council offers a fee based pre-application service to give a more detailed, tailored advice prior to a formal planning submission. This service could:

- reduce your overall cost and time to develop a project;
- reduce your risk by identifying and addressing potential issues early on; or
- discover alternative solutions that meet your aims and avoid issues.

It is particularly important to seek guidance if you live in the Blaenavon World Heritage Site, a Listed Building or Conservation Area. You can access this service by visiting the Council's website via this link: [Planning Forms | Torfaen County Borough Council](#)

### Preparing your plans

To avoid unnecessary delays in dealing with planning applications, it is important to submit scaled drawings (in metric measurements) and other supporting documents (where appropriate), which are clear and accurate. Whilst it is not a requirement, it is advisable to appoint an architect or someone who is suitably qualified and/or experienced, to prepare plans that meet validation requirements. Please refer to Appendix A for further details of information required as part of your application.

The Council's Pre-application Planning Advice Service will confirm the exact information required for your proposed development.

### Speak with Neighbours

It is always advisable to discuss proposals with your neighbours prior to the submission of a planning application or any planned works. The Council normally consults adjoining owners as part of the application process. Therefore, if you have previously discussed your scheme with them and taken into account their views, the application should run smoother.

## 5. Impact on Living Conditions

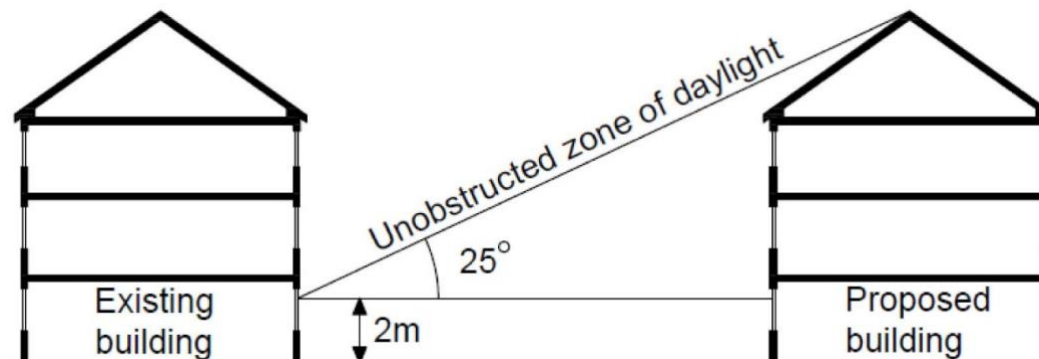
### Neighbours

Extensions (which require planning consent) that create an unacceptable sense of enclosure or appear overbearing when viewed from a neighbouring dwelling or garden will not be permitted. Also, extensions should not cause any significant loss of daylight or sunlight to the habitable rooms or gardens of neighbouring properties. This harm could be due to the height, footprint or proximity of the proposals to the surrounding area.

Proposed extensions should meet the '25 and 45 degree rules' in order to minimise adverse impact on the living conditions of opposite and adjacent residents in terms of visual intrusion, sense of enclosure and loss of light. The acceptable depth of any projection will depend on the particular circumstances of the site, such as distances from the boundary and neighbouring properties and height adjacent to the boundary. Non-compliance with the 25 and 45 degree rules will not necessarily result in refusal of planning consent, provided that appropriate analysis of the impact on the affected properties can demonstrate that the loss of sunlight, daylight and outlook is acceptable.

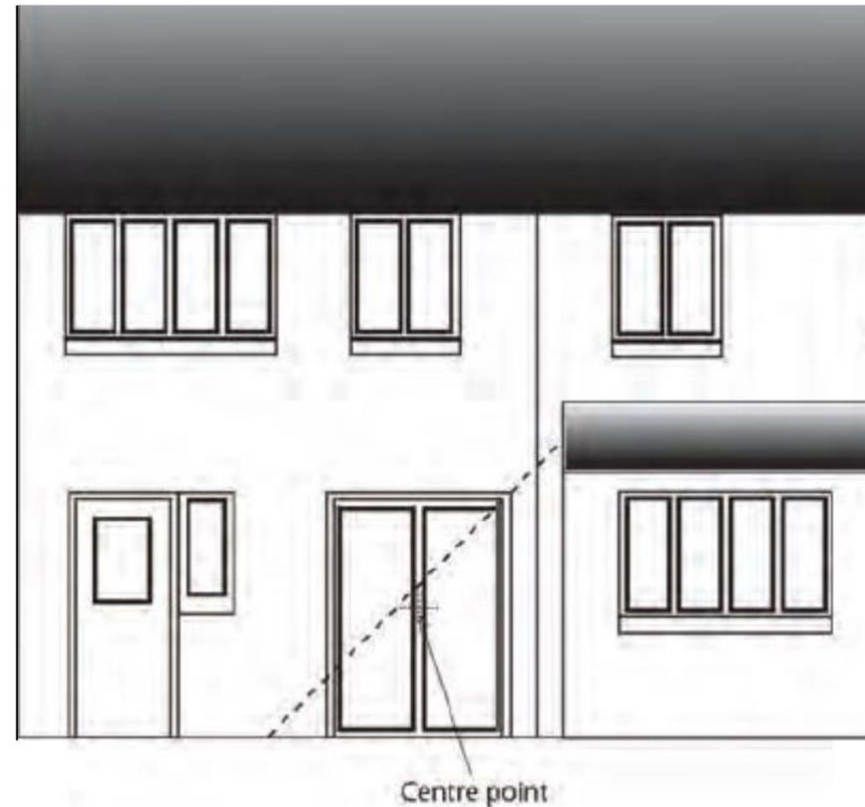
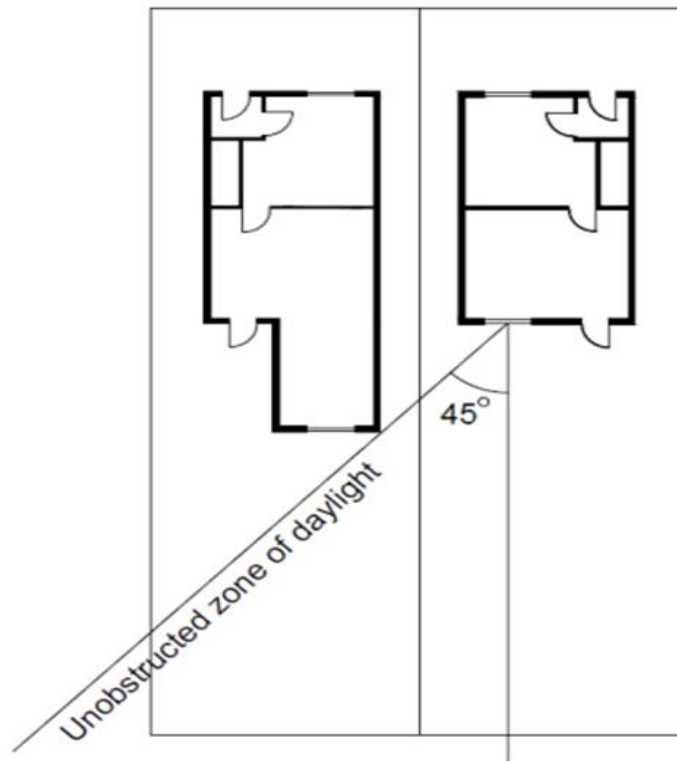
### The 25 Degree Rule

The 25 degree rule is a good guide to establish the effect a proposed development will have on existing properties with regards to obstructing daylight to existing windows / rooms. This test is carried out when the proposed building is opposite the existing building. If a new building or extension breaches a perpendicular line at an angle of 25 degrees above the horizontal taken from a point 2 metres above ground level on an existing house (the assumed position of the top of windows in the existing building), it is likely that windows in the existing house will be overshadowed. The diagram below illustrates how this rule works.

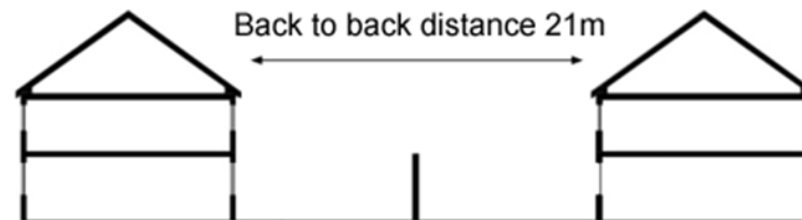


## The 45 Degree Rule

The 45 degree rule is a good guide for potential impact on an adjacent neighbour's living conditions. It looks at the layout and elevation plans of the proposed development to ensure adequate levels of natural light and outlook are retained to adjacent properties. Under this test, no part of a building should break an angle of 45 degrees drawn from the centre of a window in a room of primary living accommodation. A two-storey extension would have a more significant impact than a single storey extension. Any assessment would also need to take into account the impact of existing buildings and boundary treatments. Where an 'unobstructed zone' can be achieved within an angle of 45° drawn from the centre of the affected window satisfactory levels of natural light and outlook are likely to be achievable. The diagrams below illustrate how this rule works.



**Back to Back Distance** - A new extension should not result in any substantial loss of privacy to a neighbouring dwelling or garden. In order to prevent unacceptable overlooking, windows in elevations directly facing neighbouring properties should be avoided or include obscure glazing. Sufficient separation distances should be provided between habitable windows in proposed extensions and neighbouring properties. Generally, this should be a distance of 21 metres, but this may vary due to individual site circumstances such as where there is a difference in ground levels or where houses face each other at an angle. Balcony proposals will only be acceptable where they would not lead to an unacceptable level of overlooking.



### Existing Dwelling

Proposals should also not unduly affect the existing living conditions of the residents of the host dwelling.

Extensions should not lead to a substantial reduction in an existing garden area and properties with small existing gardens may need to limit the size of their proposals to ensure a usable level of garden space is retained. This will safeguard the living conditions of the existing residents, maintaining adequate space for recreation and washing drying facilities. As a guide, 2 bedroom properties should maintain 40m<sup>2</sup> of private garden space and 3+ bedroom properties should maintain 70m<sup>2</sup> of private garden space.

Extensions should not give rise to an unacceptable impact on the outlook or level of daylight to the habitable rooms of the existing dwelling, in order to protect the living conditions of existing and future residents.

## 6. Side and Rear Extensions

There is a variety of ways in which homes can be extended, with the most common being side and rear extensions, either one or two storeys in height.

The depth of any rear extension is a key consideration when assessing the visual impact of the extension on its host as well as assessing the impact on the quality of living conditions currently enjoyed by neighbouring properties (as discussed elsewhere within this document). The nature of the host building is also an important consideration, as the impact of any rear extension on visual or living conditions will differ if the host building is detached, semi-detached or terraced.

Rear extensions may not always be in the public view, but it is still important to ensure the design quality is of a high standard so as not to detract from the character of the existing dwelling. Oversized side extensions can cause significant disruption to the balance of the host building, harm its character and appearance and detract from the general street scene.

The starting point for any extension should be to ensure that the development would sit comfortably in the context of the existing dwelling and area. The overall shape, size and position of side and rear extensions should not dominate the existing house or its neighbours and should harmonise with the original appearance. This can be achieved by ensuring the extension appears as an obvious addition which is subordinate to the main structure, so that the original form can still be appreciated. In order to achieve this the following design principles should be followed: -

- The ridge height of any extension should be at least 300mm below the ridge height of the existing property.
- Two storey side and rear extensions should not be greater than half the width of the original building.
- A two-storey or first floor side extension should be set back a minimum of 300mm from the principal elevation.
- The roof pitch of the extension must match the pitch of the host dwelling.
- The eaves of the extension should respect that of the existing property and be at the same level or ideally just below.
- New windows within a proposed side extension should repeat the design and scale of the existing windows or should be scaled down versions consistent with the subordinate nature of an extension.
- The proposed materials of an extension should normally match as closely as possible those of the existing dwelling.

Development, which would result in the significant reduction of an existing important space or gap between neighbouring houses, is not normally acceptable. In conjunction with existing extensions to neighbouring buildings this can have a terracing effect on the street. Consequently, two storey side extensions should normally be set in 1m from the side boundary.

An over-intensification of the existing residential use through an extension or alteration, may result in an unacceptable deficit in the service requirements for the property, including car parking and garden space. Proposals where the loss of front garden space, in order to accommodate the required parking provision or the proposed extension, which would have an unacceptable impact on the street scene will be rejected.

Schemes which 'design from the inside out' through maximising the internal space and footprint of an extension usually result in a poor design solution. It often leaves an extension appearing as a contrived, disparate addition to the building and the street scene. Such proposals will be rejected.

## **7. Front Extensions**

Front extensions are generally unacceptable, particularly two storey, as they often dominate the existing dwelling and upset the character and rhythm of the street scene. Any front extension should not dominate or be incongruous with the character of the host building by introducing a discordant or inharmonious element. Front extensions should not be excessive in size, height and depth relative to the dwelling on the site and neighbouring buildings. This includes front porches where permitted development rights are exceeded and planning permission would be required.

## **8. Roofs**

The roof of a proposed extension has a major impact on the character of the building and performs an important role within the wider street scene. The following design concepts should be followed in order to ensure that the proposed development sits comfortably in the context of the existing dwelling and wider area: -

- Maintain existing style - Roofs should be of the same form as the host dwelling i.e. pitch roofs on pitch roof properties and hipped roofs on hipped roof properties.
- Match eaves and pitch - The eaves of two storey side and rear extensions should line up with those of the existing house, or be lower, and the pitch of the roof should also be similar.
- Match existing materials - The colour and shape of new tiles or slates should match those of the existing roof. This is particularly important when the new roof connects directly into the existing. Where this occurs it will be possible to re-use some tiles from where the roof connection is made. Alternatively, tiles could be removed from the back of the house to use on the front of the new extension and new materials used at the back where they may be less visible.

## 9. Roof Extensions

Roof extensions can have a serious impact on the appearance of a dwelling, as the roof is a highly visible part of a building.

Where planning permission is required, flat-roofed box-type dormers will be resisted where they are out of character with the original building. While in some circumstances, such structures are allowed under permitted development rights, they do not represent good design and do not comply with the requirements of the Council's design policies and so in most cases they are not acceptable forms of development. These structures generally have a detrimental impact on the character of the host building and the street scene context.

If a box dormer is considered the only viable option and justification to demonstrate this may be required, then to mitigate the most harmful aspects of such a design, set out below is a set of design principles that will need to be followed: -

- Be aligned with and in proportion to the host building in terms of fenestration arrangements
- Be sited 300mm below the main ridge
- Be sited 300mm from the roof verges or sides
- Be sited 500mm above the eaves

The Council will also consider the following design issues when determining applications for roof extensions:

- Keep roof extensions 'in-scale' with the existing structure.
- Extensions to the front roof plane should be avoided.
- Raising the ridge of the building is normally unacceptable.
- Roof extensions must not project above the ridgeline.
- Match / or use complementary materials - The sides of dormer windows should be covered in materials that match or complement the main roof.
- Excessive use of roof lights can appear visually disruptive. In sensitive areas, such as the World Heritage Site and Conservation Areas, it is preferable that roof lights are flush with the existing roof (conservation type) and that they are carefully placed to line up with the windows on the floor below.
- An extension that results in the conversion of an existing hip roof into a gabled roof is not desirable and will not be encouraged. This is especially so when the roof-scape and space between the buildings are important features of the character of that part of the street and there is symmetry with the adjoining semi-detached property.

## 10. External Wall Insulation, Renewable Energy Installations & Resource Efficiency

**External Wall Insulation** - Subject to building regulations approval, you can add external wall insulation to your home without the need for planning permission providing it is no more than 16cm thick, but you will need to apply for planning permission if your property is a Listed Building, in a Conservation Area or the Blaenavon World Heritage Site. External wall insulation is usually a layer of insulation that's fixed to an existing wall and finished either with a coat of render or with an alternative cladding to protect it from the elements; but there are risks of thermal bridging, increased condensation / mould growth and subsequent damage to the building fabric if not specified and installed correctly, or if the need for ventilation, airtightness, insulating other areas, etc. is not considered as part of a 'whole-house' retrofit - see useful [Guide](#) from Bristol City Council. Also, when you're thinking about your own house and if external insulation is appropriate, consider its appearance (brick, stone, render, architectural features) and setting (adjacent properties, character of street / neighbourhood) in terms of the proposed external finish and design, which should be in keeping with them.

**Solar PV Panels** - You can install roof and wall mounted solar PV panels on your dwelling (or in the garden / grounds) without the need for planning permission; subject to certain conditions, and limitations if your property is a Listed Building, in a Conservation Area or the Blaenavon World Heritage Site - see the [Planning Portal](#) for further information ([Planning permission: permitted development rights for householders | GOV.WALES](#)). Your roof should ideally face due south at a pitched angle of around 30° from the horizontal to give the best overall annual performance. Installations at any pitch and facing anywhere to the south of due east and due west are feasible, although output will be reduced; installation is not recommended on roofs facing north. Solar PV arrays are made up of modules of about 1.5m<sup>2</sup>, with typical installations around 15-25m<sup>2</sup>, generating roughly 2,500kW per annum; and National Grid Electricity Distribution (formerly known as Western Power) must be notified in advance about any installation larger than 3.68kW. Similarly, solar arrays are subject to normal building regulations, which involves checking electrical safety and, if applicable, considering a 'structural report' to show that the roof can support the extra weight.

**Air (Ground or Water) Source Heat Pump** - Subject to building regulations approval, you can install an air (ground or water) source heat pump without the need for planning permission on your dwelling or within the garden or grounds, including on a building within that curtilage; and subject to certain conditions, and limitations if your property is a Listed Building, in a Conservation Area or the Blaenavon World Heritage Site - see the [Planning Portal](#) for further information ([Planning permission: permitted development rights for householders | GOV.WALES](#)).

**Other Low / Zero Carbon & Resource Efficiency Measures** - you might also want to consider: installing an electric / hybrid vehicle charging point; water efficiency measures such as rainwater harvesting & grey water recycling; 'green' roofs / walls; using material resources efficiently, that are sourced locally, or are reclaimed or have a higher recycled / low carbon content; and preventing waste; etc. as part of any works.



## 11. Outbuildings and Domestic Garages

Outbuildings include garden sheds, greenhouses, garages or storerooms. Often planning consent is not required to construct modest sized outbuildings, provided that they are used for 'purposes incidental to the enjoyment of your house', and not for commercial purposes or as separate residential accommodation. As with extensions and alterations to your house, the location and design of your garage or outbuilding should respect the character and appearance of your property, the relationship of your property with neighbouring houses and the overall street scene.

**Outbuildings** should:

- be located as far away as possible from any shared boundaries to safeguard the living conditions of the residents of neighbouring houses;
- not be built forward of the established building line, i.e. in front of the existing house;
- relate well to the design of the existing house, particularly in terms of scale and materials; and,
- not affect the existing parking provision of the development with any parking lost as a result of the outbuilding being replaced on site.

**Garages** should be designed so that:

- the internal dimensions for a single garage are at least 6m in length by 3m in width, greater if the garage has been designed to incorporate cycle storage;
- the garage should be set back at least 6m from the pavement to allow a vehicle to park in front of the garage whilst allowing the doors to be opened;
- where attached to an existing dwelling, design guidance for single storey extensions has been followed; and
- they are not sited in front of an established building line and orientated at right angles to existing house.

## 12. Self-Contained Residential Annexes

An annex is an extension, attached to the main dwelling. There should be a clear link with the main dwelling.

An annex will only be acceptable where the scale and appearance of the building is modest in comparison to the main dwelling. An annex can include the sharing of garden space, kitchen / bathroom facilities and access. An acceptable arrangement would be a bed-sitting room or a sitting room and separate bedroom together with a kitchenette and bathroom.

Applications for accommodation on a large scale and providing for further rooms will not normally be acceptable.

The main entrance should be via the existing entrance to the dwelling. A separate front entrance to the annex will not normally be acceptable.

The conversion of an outbuilding to an annex, which is considered to be tantamount to the creation of a new dwelling house, will not be acceptable. The development will be considered a new self-contained dwelling if the internal accommodation becomes self-sufficient and there is no clear link with the main dwelling.

### **13. Biodiversity and the Resilience of Ecosystems**

Local Authorities have a statutory duty to consider biodiversity when assessing planning applications, under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Planning Policy Wales Ed. 11 sets out that 'planning authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions'.

Therefore, all householder developments are expected to include appropriate biodiversity enhancement features, in line with advice provided within the pre-application process. This information should be submitted as part of a planning application. Applicants are strongly advised not to clear any features with biodiversity value, such as existing vegetation, hedgerows or trees, prior to securing planning consent.

Also, where there is a likelihood that a proposal might affect protected / priority species or habitats, the Council will require survey information in order to make an assessment of the impacts of the proposals. For example, where potential roosting features are identified on buildings or trees affected by the proposed development, or where there is suitable ecological connectivity (water / woodland), or where existing ecological records for protected / priority species are held. Confirmation of whether ecological surveys would be required for a proposal would be included within any formal Pre-application planning advice given.

More detailed information regarding biodiversity requirements for planning applications can be found in the Authority's leaflet 'Planning and biodiversity guidance' (available on TBC website). This advice includes suggestions of ways biodiversity enhancement measures can be incorporated into householder proposals.

## 14. Trees and Landscaping

Trees and other landscaping help make areas more attractive and make a positive contribution to the biodiversity of an area. Landscaping is an essential element of good design. For these reasons, existing landscaping should be retained and enhanced. However, new development can often result in the loss of landscaping and, as such, it is essential that you consider how your development will impact upon existing landscaping and how it can be designed so as to incorporate new landscaping.

Where possible, you should avoid the removal of visually significant and healthy trees. You will need to ensure that if extensions are next to existing or proposed new tree(s), there will be enough room for the tree(s) to grow to maturity, to avoid complaints regarding property damage; not unduly restricting: light, views or the use of your garden; and also ensure that the tree or its roots will not be damaged during construction, by temporary fencing off the tree(s) around the crown / root spread. This will help to ensure the tree does not have to be removed in the future. If the loss of the tree is unavoidable, a tree condition survey should be submitted as part of your planning application; also check for wildlife. Where trees are proposed for removal, replacement trees, preferably a native species, of the same canopy size once matured, should be planted in another location within the site.

The Council can make a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) in order to protect important trees. It is an offence to cut down, lop, uproot, wilfully damage and / or destroy a TPO tree without first getting permission. A check should therefore be made to identify if any of the trees on your site are protected by a TPO. Trees within a Conservation Area are also protected.

## 15. Decking, Fences / Garden Walls, Gates & Hedges

You can put up low level **decking** or other raised platforms, in the garden of your house without the need for planning permission, subject to certain conditions and limitations - see the [Planning Portal](#) for further information ([Planning permission: permitted development rights for householders | GOV.WALES](#)). Also, please consider the visual impact and overlooking on your neighbours and the streetscene in the design and location of your decking.

Similarly, you do not need planning permission if you wish to erect a new; or alter, maintain, improve or take down an existing **fence, wall or gate** subject to certain conditions and limitations, or if there are restrictions under a planning condition or a covenant (for example, on "open plan" estates, or where a driver's sight line could be blocked) - see the [Planning Portal](#) for further information ([Planning permission: permitted development rights for householders | GOV.WALES](#)). Also, please consider the visual impact on your neighbours and the streetscene in the design and location; generally, the materials and design of boundary treatments should replicate those in the area; noting that hedges are better for wildlife, especially for attracting garden birds, etc.

Finally, you do not need planning permission for **hedges** as such; though if a planning condition or a covenant restricts planting (for example, on "open plan" estates, or where a driver's sight line could be blocked) you may need planning permission and / or other consent. There are no laws that say how high you can grow a hedge; unless its height 'adversely affects the reasonable enjoyment' of your neighbour's domestic property, where the Council would deal with a complaint under the 'high hedges' [legislation](#). Therefore, we suggest a 2m high hedge should be sufficient to maintain privacy and not cause a nuisance, etc.

Also, before planting, please choose the right hedging species which are best for wildlife, aesthetics, maintenance and you and your neighbours amenity (which will not: block light to main rooms or winter sunshine; spread into the garden and affect the growth of plants; push over a fence; or the roots damage a path, drive, garage or home, etc.); as you are responsible for looking after any hedge on your property and for making sure it's not a nuisance to anyone else. Indeed, you can help prevent a hedge on your property from becoming a nuisance by 'safely' trimming the top and all sides, annually in the winter months, when there is no danger that birds may be nesting (as it is against the law to disturb nesting wild birds - or check for nests first at other times).

When installing new fences, walls or hedges, in line with a Council motion in March 2022, consideration must be given to incorporating a series of '**hedgehog highways**' or tunnels / holes to allow hedgehogs (which are listed as a conservation priority under Section 7 of the Environmental Wales Act 2016 as a species of principle importance) to roam freely between gardens / habitats and thus avoid dangerous roads. 13 x 13cm (5 x 5") holes or gaps at ground level, on 'safe' boundaries, will let hedgehogs through but be too small for most pets.

## 16. Contact Details

Further information can be found on the Council's website: [Planning Permission | Torfaen County Borough Council](#)

Development Management can be contacted by email [planning@torfaen.gov.uk](mailto:planning@torfaen.gov.uk) or 01495 762200

Further information regarding Buildings Regulations can be found on the Council website: [Building Regulations | Torfaen County Borough Council](#)

## 17. Glossary

**Context:** a building or site context usually refers to the surrounding physical environment

**Eaves:** the lowest, overhanging part of a sloping roof.

**Fenestration:** the pattern formed by windows in a building façade.

**Gable / pitched roof:** Consists of two roof sections sloping in opposite directions and placed such that the highest, horizontal edges meet to form the roof ridge

**Habitable rooms:** the main living areas in a home including, but not exclusively, bedrooms, kitchens, bathrooms and sitting rooms.

**Hipped roof:** a roof which usually has four slopes (in the case of detached buildings) and three slopes (in the case of semi-detached homes) instead of the two slopes of the ordinary gable / pitched roof. It slopes downwards from all sides to the walls and hence has no gables or vertical sides

**Listed Building:** a building that has been placed on the Statutory listed of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. A limited building may not be demolished, extended, or altered without listed building consent being granted.

**Overbearing:** a term used to describe the impact of a development or building on its surroundings, particular a neighbouring property, in terms of scale, massing, and general dominating effect.

**Permitted Development Rights:** Rights to enable homeowners to undertake certain types of work without the need to apply for planning permission.

**Ridge:** the apex of a pitched roof where the two slopes meet, especially the horizontal edge thus formed.

**Roof pitch:** the steepness of a roof, usually expressed as an angle

**Roofscape:** a scene or view of roofs

**Unacceptable sense of enclosure:** a term used to describe where the overall height, scale and position of a proposed development in relation to an existing property or garden area encloses that space and results in an overly dominant feature.

**Setting:** the area surrounding a site.

**Streetscene:** the overall impression given by the design and arrangement of buildings, landscaping and open space.

**Subordinate design:** a design that allows the original building to remain dominant in terms of massing, height and position.

## APPENDIX A - Information to Submit in Support of a Planning Application

**Location plan** - Scale 1:1250 preferably and no smaller than 1:2500. Ordnance Survey extracts are preferred. Include a North arrow. Outline the application site in red line, and indicate any adjoining land owned or controlled by the applicant with a blue line.

**Block plan** - Scale typically 1:200 or appropriate scale to ascertain required level of detail. North point, date and number on plans. Show all of the existing house in plan form including the position of any existing outbuildings, garages, significant trees, driveways, parking areas and other notable features. The existing boundary treatment to the site and if possible, the position of the nearest neighbouring properties.

**Details of proposed site layout** - Scale, typically 1:200. North point, date and number on plans. Show proposals in the context of adjacent buildings. Show the siting of any new building or extension, vehicular / pedestrian access, changes in levels, landscape proposals, including trees to be removed, new planting, new or altered boundary walls and fences, and new hard-surfaced open spaces. Car parking spaces and / or garage space must be shown on submitted drawings. Details are to include existing and proposed parking facilities even if not affected by the building works.

**Floor plans** - Scale 1:50 or 1:100 In the case of an extension, show the floor layout of the existing building to indicate the relationship between the two, clearly indicating new work. Show floor plans in the context of adjacent buildings, where appropriate. In the case of minor applications, it may be appropriate to combine the layout and floor plan (unless any demolition is involved).

Include a **roof plan** where necessary to show a complex roof or alteration to an existing roof.

**Elevations** - Scale 1:50 or 1:100 (consistent with floor plans). Show every elevation of a new building or extension. For an extension or alteration, clearly distinguish existing and proposed elevations. Include details of material and external appearance. Show elevations in the context of adjacent buildings. Street scene sketches will be particularly important where an extension to a semi-detached or terraced property is proposed.

**Ecological Enhancement scheme.**

**Cross Sections** - Scale 1:50 / 1:100, where appropriate.

Depending on the site-specific circumstances the following supporting information may also be required - **Heritage Impact Statement, Archaeological Assessment, Conservation Area Statement, Tree Survey, Ecology surveys, Drainage Statement, etc.**

**The Council's Pre-application Planning Advice Service will confirm the exact information required for your proposed development:** [Planning Forms | Torfaen County Borough Council](#)