

West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 (adopted June 2025)

Policy DM28

Residential Extensions

The principle of the extension of existing permanent dwellings will be supported. In the National Landscape and its setting particular regard will be given to the impact of proposals on the special qualities and natural beauty of the landscape in accordance with policy SP2.

An extension, including alterations, or erection of an outbuilding will be permitted where the proposal complies with the following criteria:

- a. The scale of the enlargement or outbuilding is clearly subservient to the original dwelling;
- b. It is of a high quality design, in accordance with policy SP7, which conserves and enhances the character and local distinctiveness of the surrounding area in accordance with policy SP8;
- c. It does not harm the setting of the existing dwelling and the space occupied within the plot boundary;
- d. It does not harm the historic and/or architectural interest of the existing dwelling;
- e. The use of materials is appropriate within the local architectural context;
- f. It is not overbearing or of a form which would be detrimental to the amenity of nearby residents by virtue of loss of outlook, daylight, sunlight and / or privacy in accordance with policy DM30;
- g. The windows are appropriate in terms of number, architectural style and type, position, size and proportion, extent of opening and need for obscure glazing;
- h. Following construction of the extension, sufficient space is available for on-site vehicular parking in accordance with policy DM44 in a way that does not detract from the character and appearance of the area;
- i. It enables for the retention and provision of high quality useable private amenity space in accordance with policy DM30;
- j. It would not result in adverse impacts on trees (including their roots and canopy spread) on and off site, in accordance with policy DM15. Trees should be retained where possible; and
- k. The proposal conserves and enhances biodiversity, in accordance with policy SP11.

Proposals for residential annexes will also need to be in accordance with policy DM29.

Supporting Text

11.70 The policy relates to the extension of existing permanent dwellings, including alterations, and the erection of outbuildings. It applies to residential extensions both inside and outside of settlement boundaries. House extensions are one of the most common forms of development in the District, whether they are permitted development or require planning permission. The purpose of the policy is to avoid the over-extension of existing dwellings and the adverse impact that this has on the character and appearance of both the site and its wider surroundings, whether it is part of an existing settlement or in the countryside. All proposals will be therefore be considered in accordance with the context of the design principles set out in policy SP7.

11.71 Overall, there is a general policy of restraint in the countryside but it is recognised that there are many existing dwellings in the rural area and that over time, proposals will come forward for extensions to these, including the erection of outbuildings within their curtilage. The Council may permit these changes where it does not undermine the general policy of restraint or have an adverse impact on the rural character of the countryside.

11.72 In the rural area, the enlargement of a small rural dwelling to become a substantial house can have a significant impact, whether that is through the cumulative impact of several small extensions or one large one. An assessment will be needed of the impact of the development, individually and/or cumulatively, on the local architectural and visual context, and the capacity of the wider landscape to accommodate such development, especially within the National Landscape and its setting. The enlarged dwelling should be capable of being accommodated into the existing landscape, without undermining or having an adverse impact on the rural character of the area. This will include consideration of the impact of any new proposed access arrangements.

11.73 In all development proposals, the relationship with the existing dwelling is key. The design of any development should be sympathetic to the character of the existing dwelling, the area adjacent to the site and its wider setting. Proposed changes, either individually or cumulatively should not overwhelm or dominate the character and

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appearance of the original dwelling or be excessive in size. They should appear as a subservient addition in both proportion and style. Consideration will be given to the scale, height, width, length, massing (volume) and footprint (floorspace) of an extension, materials, position within the plot and general context of the locality.

11.74 It is acknowledged that the original character of a house can be lost if the property is extended in an unsympathetic way through the addition of numerous extensions. In some circumstances, it may be more appropriate to provide one new extension as a replacement for several existing extensions, especially where these are in poor condition or do not reflect the original character of the building.

11.75 Regard will be given to previous extensions, including annexes and existing outbuildings on the site, either allowed through Permitted Development Rights or through planning approvals. All applications will need to consider the impact of the cumulative extensions on the original dwelling as it was built or as it was on 1 July 1948. In applying the policy the Council will have regard as to what it sees as any attempt to circumvent the planning process by fragmenting a potentially large extension into a series of smaller extensions submitted over a relatively short period of time.

11.76 There are no 'rules' that can be applied to an acceptable size of an extension as each application has to be considered on the basis of the impacts on the particular property in that location.

11.77 Side extensions should not unbalance the appearance of the main dwelling and of surrounding dwellings (e.g. when in a pair of semi-detached properties, or at the end of a terrace). It is therefore recommended that a side extension in particular should be set back from the front of the dwelling and set down from the roof. Front extensions should not dominate the frontage of the dwelling. Factors such as the prominence in the street scene, relationship with neighbouring properties, depth of front gardens and landscaping will be considered when assessing such schemes. Whilst rear extensions may not have such an impact on the surrounding area, they should still follow any established pattern of development and ensure they are subservient, particularly in rural locations.

11.78 Extensions should be constructed in materials that harmonise with the character of the dwelling being extended. Materials should be chosen to complement the character and appearance of the existing built form and surrounding area. Materials that will appear alien in their surroundings or at odds with surrounding built form will not be accepted.

11.79 Architectural detailing is important. In most cases an extension will be more sympathetic to the original building if similar detailing is used. Replication of the head and cill details to windows and doors can be an effective way of integrating the old with the new. Similarly roof details on the verge, eaves and ridge of the roof can be detailed in the same way as the original building and achieve a sense of continuity. The bonding of the brickwork and matching of the mortar type and joints are also important, so that the new brickwork blends with the old. There may be circumstances, however, where it may be appropriate for modern additions to differentiate between the 'old' and the 'new', particularly for listed buildings. In such cases, particular care will need to be taken to ensure the extension would not dominate the original building and that it would make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness through high standards of design.

11.80 When assessing proposals for development the Council will take account of the potential impact on the living conditions of any neighbouring occupiers and on any other adjacent uses in accordance with policy DM30 Residential Amenity. Care will be exercised to ensure that a proposed extension will not give rise to increased over-looking, loss of daylight and sunlight, be of an overbearing nature or have a serious adverse impact on habitable rooms of adjacent or adjoining properties. For example, a two-storey extension sited to the rear of a terraced or semi-detached property requires careful design to ensure that the amenities of the neighbours are not seriously affected.

11.81 Extensions that overshadow a neighbour's property resulting in an unacceptable loss of light will not be accepted. The Building Research Establishment (BRE) Guide "Site Layout Planning for Daylight & Sunlight. A Guide to Good Practice (2022) (or any further update) is a useful guide in the assessment of this. The orientation of the host dwelling and neighbouring dwellings (in terms of how the sun tracks throughout the day) and positioning of windows in neighbouring dwellings are important factors in assessing the scale of impact on neighbouring properties. Leaving space between properties may assist in avoiding loss of light, and reducing loss of outlook.

11.82 Development which results in an oppressive outlook (e.g. a large blank wall) and an overbearing impact to neighbouring dwellings will not be accepted. An overbearing development can be one where it results in an undue sense of enclosure.

11.83 Window design and position needs to be considered carefully in order to maintain and protect existing privacy levels with neighbours. Detailed plans should be submitted with development proposals in order for a full and accurate assessment to be made. Where possible windows should replace like for like and be of a similar design, style and

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shape to those existing or positioned at high level or with obscure glazing in order to prevent significant additional overlooking. When designing an extension it is important to consider the size, style and proportion of the windows, and seek to complement the existing style of the dwelling. Dormer windows in particular can have a dominating impact and should be well proportioned within the roofscape. Roof lights are preferable as they result in less intrusion in the roofscape, and may also result in less overlooking to neighbouring properties.

11.84 Household extensions should ensure that adequate parking remains commensurate with the number of bedrooms, in line with policy DM44. Should the parking area be affected by an extension manoeuvring space should be maintained, or provided, where the access is on to a main road.

11.85 Consideration also needs to be given to the location of existing trees and hedges affected by the proposed development. They can be important visual elements, help to soften the impact of development, add value to the character of the area, and have an inherent biodiversity value. They are also useful natural tools in carbon capture. The policy therefore makes clear that trees should be retained where possible.

11.86 Householders are encouraged and expected to consider measures to conserve and enhance biodiversity in both the design of their proposals and implementation of biodiversity measures. This could be through the retention and planting of trees, bat boxes, bird boxes, space for hedgehogs to move under fences, bee friendly planting, etc. in accordance with policy SP11.

11.87 The policy makes clear that outbuildings should be designed and sited so as not to dominate the main dwelling and not have an adverse impact on the street scene. Where possible they should be sited to the rear or side of the main dwelling where the visual impact is likely to be lower. Keeping the height of the eaves and roof pitch low, and keeping the overall size limited are methods of ensuring this. Outbuildings can sometimes contain ancillary accommodation either in a room above parking space(s), accessed via steps, or within the ground floor. Dormer windows may be proposed. Such buildings may not be considered subservient, though this depends on the size and style of the outbuilding in relation to the host dwelling, the outbuilding's location within the site, any building it replaces, and the character of the locality. Proposals for residential annexes will also need to comply with policy DM29.

11.88 Single or double detached garages of appropriate dimensions and design may be permitted if they are not intrusive upon the local area, remain subordinate to and do not detract from the character and appearance of the main dwelling.

11.89 For the purposes of applying this policy, the use of outbuildings to support home working and home-based businesses will generally be supported where this does not involve a change of use of the main dwelling or have an adverse impact on the residential amenities of adjoining residents or the distinctive local character of the area.

11.90 It is expected that extensions, including outbuildings, will remain ancillary and/or incidental to the residential use of the host dwelling. Where necessary, planning conditions, or planning obligations, will be used to control the permitted use.

11.91 There are extensive Permitted Development Rights enabling the enlargement or alteration of a house and erection of outbuildings without requiring a formal planning application. These rights come with standard conditions and both the rights and conditions may be changed through Government legislation. It is essential to establish what rights currently exist in the particular location. Rights may be removed or restricted by the Council in some exceptional circumstances and the presence of such a restriction must be checked prior to commencing any development thought to be permitted. Proposals which are permitted development subject to prior approval (e.g. larger extensions) will be assessed using criterion d of this policy, as well as policy DM30, in the event where neighbouring residents raise objections.