

Residential Design Guide – Section 2 “Appearance and character of house extensions and alterations”

Response to consultation

March 2014

The table below sets out the main comments received together with the council response. Comments about grammatical and formatting issues or references to specific private dwellings within North Somerset have been omitted.

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Council response</b>	<b>Document changes</b>
Ascent Architecture	Comments annotated on printed document. The main comment related to windows and roof lights to unlisted buildings and confirmed that they often don't require permission.	Noted that not all windows require permission. However, the advice given can still help people who don't need permission to consider design issues.	None
Backwell Parish Council	Backwell Parish Council have reviewed the above-mentioned document, and fully support it. They are of the opinion it is clearly written for all to understand, and it explains how to make acceptable planning applications when applying for an extension or any alterations.	Comments gratefully received and noted	None
Cadplan	There is nothing relating to 'granny annexe's' but these are becoming more common and are a way of providing a lifetime home and freeing up housing stock	This document relates to house extensions and alterations only, advice about 'granny annexes' would need to be the subject of a separate advice document.	None.
Cadplan	Is this meant to cover the design of new houses as this is more important than advice on extensions as the visual impact is generally far more. The standard of new house design in the LA area varies greatly and needs to be more considered, there is a	This document only relates to the extension and alteration of existing dwellings and not new dwellings.	None.

	case for asking for the architectural merits to be examined by people more suitably qualified than town planning officers to ensure that good and appropriate design standards of new housing are achieved. The submission should give an accurate representation of the final built form and how it will look from street level.		
Coal Authority	No specific comments	Noted	None
Locking Parish Council	Locking Parish Council have reviewed the Draft Residential Design Guide and fully support it. They are of the opinion that the sooner this is out in the Public domain, the better.	These comments are gratefully received and noted	None
Long Ashton Parish Council	Long Ashton Parish Council believes this to be a useful document that should be adopted.	Comments are noted and gratefully received.	None
Mr R Sheppard	Excellent. As a parish councillor I welcome these guidelines, which will be so useful when looking at planning applications. The policy is really well done, concise and explanatory, with useful drawings. Thank you for the opportunity to view.	Comments gratefully received and noted	None
Nailsea Town Council (Sue Walker)	The comments made by Nailsea Town Council were that they would ask North Somerset Council to include that planning approval should not be given to a new separate dwelling being built onto semi-detached properties.	This SPD document relates to house extensions only and not new dwellings. However, it is possible to design an extension to create a new dwelling that is attached to an existing semi detached or terraced building and that respects the character and appearance of the street scene. There is therefore no reason why there should be a blanket policy to refuse this form of development. In addition, concerns relating to loss of value of attached properties are not a material planning consideration and are not taken into account.	No change
Natural England	On this occasion we do not wish to provide specific comments.	Noted	None
Network Rail (B Morgan)	No comments	Noted	None
PORTISHEAD TOWN COUNCIL	Portishead Town Council has no further comment to make	Noted	None
Wessex Water	The guidance has been provided to influence the appearance and character of house extensions in	A separate advice note about drainage issues will be published in for home owners and this document will	Add additional note at section 1 clarifying that

	<p>residential areas. The critical factors are the shape and form of these new alterations and the information provides suitable guidance on these matters.</p> <p>Public sewers are often located within private gardens with access manholes to clear blockages and prevent sewer flooding.</p> <p>We can advise that on occasions we will object to some applications where we will not consent to building over a public sewer. In the circumstances we will normally advise the planning authority that we will not permit the proposal under Building Regulations and make a formal objection. We acknowledge that this may be infrequent and we are not a statutory consultee, however we request that some reference is made for the applicant to check a map of public sewers and consult with Wessex Water where necessary.</p> <p>As the statutory undertaker we have a duty to maintain and repair public sewers and it will be helpful for Wessex Water to confirm appropriate advice in these situations. Further advice can be found on our website under the developer pages.</p>	cover the issues referred to in these comments.	this document relates to planning only and the need to check other consent regimes.
Winscombe and Sandford Parish Council	Whilst considering this to be a useful tool in the planning process note that no reference is made within the SPD to increasing energy efficiency through design. The document could be further enhanced by reference to sustainable design and construction for extensions in conformity with policy CS2 of the Core Strategy.	This document relates to design and appearance issues only. It is not intended to cover all issues relating to extending or altering dwellings. Any advice to encourage sustainable development would need to be covered in a separate document.	None
Wrighton Parish Council	It is felt that the draft document is clearly written and informative and the Council commends NSC on its content and presentation.	Comments gratefully received and noted	None
Kingston Seymour Parish Council	Section 2.1. The list of 7 items beginning "In particular consider the following:" should be amended to include reference to the effect of the proposed extension on the street scene and the density of housing in the immediate area. Is there space for an extension of the proposed size without	This is issue is already addressed within "The standard" at 3.1 which states "Overly large extensions or buildings that harm the visually quality of an area will not be granted planning permission"	None

	it resulting in a cramped appearance in relation to neighbouring buildings? It could be argued that this is implicit in Para 3.1.2 (first sentence), but in view of the considerable potential for damage to the street scene through cramming additional built structures the Parish Council considers that a more explicit treatment of this aspect of design is justified.		
Kingston Seymour Parish Council	Section 3.1.2, fourth paragraph. Although this term may be familiar to architects and builders, the Parish Council wonders whether the word "subservient" (subservient extensions) will be readily understood by householders. In general parlance the word means something completely different! The diagrams should explain it, but in the interest of plain English perhaps another word could be used "subordinate / secondary / ancillary?"	Section 3.1.2 specifically explains how to make an extension subservient within the third sentence and this is reinforced by an image.	None
P Middle	On point 3.1.3 New Buildings (pg 6); it states that "new buildings such as garages are not to be overly large so that they dominate either the original house or the street scene". NSom need to be aware that any new Garage as SPD section 3 (parking) proposal of 3 x 7M will result in extremely dominant garages in appearance. Just the height of the roof (if eaves front 45 deg pitch) could be as high as nearly 6m! Clearly this point proposed in section 2 will NOT accord and conflicts with proposals set out in section 3 (parking), leaving unclear guidance for all types of Customers.	Overly large outbuildings such as garages will not normally be allowed if they will harm the character of the street scene. If there is a conflict between providing adequate garaged parking and appearance each case will be considered on its own merits.	None
P Middle	On point 3.4.1 Roof Lights (pg 11) indicating an ideal location of roof lights to the side or rear elevations contravenes basic H&S common sense to have fire escape roof lights to the front elevation allowing the fire service the most effective and simplest means to rescue the occupants should a fire be preventing emergency egress from the loft to the GF. For the fire service to traverse through gates/fences/rear entrances to put up ladders on the side or rear can only waste valuable time and would give reason for negative press attention	Agreed	Delete "As such they should ideally be located at the side or rear of a property."

	should. I would suggest tweaking the wording slightly to include generally accepting fire escape roof lights to front elevations.		
K M Day	There are times when making a building bigger than the surrounding structures can work. This policy makes it too easy for officers to reject good design. If everything is kept at the same or smaller scale than the existing we lose the ability to create character and end up with estates where there is no feature. Do not restrict the height of buildings to make official decisions easier instead ask for much greater justification from the designer.	The document is not stating home extensions will automatically be refused but that overly large extensions or out buildings that harm the visual quality of an area will not be granted planning permission.	None
Andrew	I support the concept of appropriate and shapely extensions to existing buildings, but there has to be a mechanism within the planning system to allow for sympathetic modern extensions, and indeed new builds of architectural merit, even within "chocolate box villages"	Agreed. The document allows for appropriately shaped extensions. The mechanism is that each case has to be considered on its own merits.	None
Cadplan	The dormer advice isn't very informative given the various styles possible, fine if you have no particular wish to recommend particular types, if not give examples	There is no need to recommend a particular styles of dormer extension for the whole of North Somerset	
NigS	Extensions - a side wall parallel to the existing build is a very rigid approach, as is the insistence of a right-angle geometry. There are frequent examples of buildings responding to splayed boundaries, turning corners, and neighbourhood grain. Consideration of sun path is also relevant.	The document allows for schemes to be approved that have a wall that is not inline with the boundary so long as it does not harm the visual quality of the area. As always each case will be considered on its merits.	Remove last sentence of 3.2.1.
NigS	3.2.2 roof shape - Consideration of roof shape responding to solar panel installation and efficient orientation should be taken into account. Otherwise opportunities for energy conservation are likely to be lost.	This document relates to character and appearance issues only. Any advice about energy efficiency measures would need to be the subject of separate advice.	None
Andrew	Agreed - in particular, it should be mandatory for parking areas to be constructed of permeable and or porous materials to ensure surface water has the means to soak away naturally.	This document states that permeable materials should be used to reduce surface water runoff.	None
Cadplan	The sketch showing a small gap between houses	This document was not adopted when the permission	None

	as being not acceptable conflicts with an approval given for 3 large detached houses at Clevedon which are approx 800mm apart	referred to was granted.	
Dr Gavin Rider	<p>I am pleased to see that gaps between properties are mentioned and extensions that go all the way to a plot boundary are being discouraged, because such proposals have previously been passed by North Somerset Council.</p> <p>I am also pleased to see that excessive hard standing in front of properties is now being discouraged, because there have been planning applications in the past that were manifestly unsympathetic with the street scene but approved by North Somerset Council's planners.</p> <p>This new guidance is definitely an improvement - providing the planners actually adhere to it.</p>	Noted.	None
John Banks, Tickenham	There is no mention in the guide about the fact that forward visibility from street corners for traffic emerging from side streets must be maintained. The guide talks about building lines but existing visibility for traffic and pedestrians must be maintained.	This document relates to appearance issues only. Issues relating to highway safety would need to be the subject of a separate document.	None
Andrew	Again, if an extension is of architectural merit and is well designed, then roof openings could be permitted to be unsymmetrical. If it is along a run of an existing roof, then it should be symmetrical, and well designed.	Agreed. The document allows for variation by using the term "normally". In addition each case will be considered on its own merits.	None
Cadplan	surely roof windows don't require planning consent so why mention them?	Noted that not all windows require permission. However, the advice given can still help people who don't need permission to consider design issues.	None
Andrew	It should be mandatory that new builds, especially in large developments, repeat the architectural detailing prevalent in the area. There are too many examples of &"cheap and nasty" designs that pepperpot various villages and towns. I would point to certain areas in the Cotswolds where the use of local materials and features, combined with appropriate spacing between houses/blocks of flats	This document relates to the extension and alteration of existing dwellings only and makes no comment about designing new houses. The comments made would need to be accommodated within a separate document.	None

	means that new development blends in sympathetically with the surrounding area.		
Cadplan	Re new boundary walls and gates maybe you should mention highway safety considerations? Trees: do you have the power to condition the retention of existing trees if not subject to a TPO. If not then it should be made clear. It's good to retain trees but again at Clevedon you sanctioned the removal of mature trees which has resulted in the street scene being drastically changed and amenity value lost</p>	This document relates to appearance issues only. Issues relating to highway safety would need to be the subject of a separate document. Conditions can be applied to retain trees.	None
Dr Gavin Rider	With regard to fences, I think more description is needed. In particular, if the street scene does not already have any tall boundary walls and fences, new high level fences should be refused permission.	It is agreed that inappropriate walls and fences can have a harmful impact on the character of the area. However, it would not be possible to describe all scenarios when a boundary treatment is unacceptable. Each case has to be considered on its own merits. In addition, bullet points 1 and 2 provide an appropriate framework to assess proposals.	At 3.6.1, second bullet point replace affect with harm.
NigS	3.6.1 fencing I offer an example of a 2m high fence, recently erected on the road boundary (within a small development) directly in contravention of the planning consent. NSDC will not enforce compliance so not much point in providing any guidance.	Each case is considered on its merits and the guidance provided about fences will help developers to know what issues we will be taking into account when considering the visual impact of the proposal.	None.
P G Young	It is important that any new structure is placed away from neighbors boundary where there is a choice. New trees and shrubs being planted should, when fully grown, be no higher than eight feet and kept at no higher than that to avoid loss of light to neighbors and root damage to adjoining property. For the same reasons older trees should be kept pruned . Some insurance companies are now adding penalty's to the schedule for trees above a certain height, and close to any property.	New buildings and structures built up to the boundary can be appropriate in terms of the visual impact of the development. In relation to trees the purpose of this document is to highlight the need to consider trees when planning the development. This document is not intended to be a detailed guide on how to look after trees.	None
Cadplan	I don't think this is relevant to planning, it's 'tinkering'	The purpose of this section is to encourage people to consider opportunities to improve their property even if planning permission is not required.	None

Andrew	<p>In the green belt, the 50% gross floor area should not count any increases as a result of creating a basement within the footprint of the house/dwelling. Basements are not visually intrusive (apart from during their construction), and are a useful way of adding space to a house without adding large extensions at ground/1st floor level. Anything that encourages better use of the existing footprint of the building should be permitted, as long as it is designed properly and conforms to the relevant building regulations and listing requirements.</p>	<p>The 50% rule is used as a guide to help consider if a proposal is a disproportionate addition. Account is also taken of the design and siting and a range of other factors as listed at paragraph 6.21 of the NSPL. Therefore, if a proposal exceeds 50% but would not, given the factors listed at paragraph 6.21 be a disproportionate addition then it could be considered acceptable.</p>	<p>&lt;p&gt;None.&lt;/p&gt;</p>
Cadplan	<p>I don't think you can back this up as many approvals have been given for larger extensions in the Greenbelt. This policy has not been enforced along Cadbury Camp Lane!</p>	<p>Each case is considered on its own merits.</p>	<p>None</p>
Dr Gavin Rider	<p>Why is the restriction on extension of garden areas limited to properties in the Green Belt? This should apply to areas in the AONB as well.</p>	<p>The rules relating to AONB differ from those of the Green Belt. In the AONB it is possible to extend a garden without being contrary to policy.</p>	<p>None</p>
NSC Resident	<p>Extensions in the Green Belt.  With reference to the guideline: An extension to a house will not normally be regarded as disproportionate if it does not exceed 50% of the gross floor area of the original house. I agree with the inclusion of the statement "will not normally" as this shows consistency to the flexible approach that NSC has shown in the past, especially on larger than average plot sizes.  It also concurs with Policy DM13: Development within the Green Belt, which allows for more substantial house extensions or replacement houses on spacious plots. But to show consistency across all of North Somerset, wouldn't it make sense to impose a further guideline and similar to that within Permitted Development which allows for no more than 50% of the garden to be covered.  Therefore I suggest including a statement along the lines of "Extensions greater than the original 50% allowance will only be considered so long as it results in no more than 20% of the garden being</p>	<p>This document cannot make new policy and the 50% rule is set by the supporting text to policy RD/3 of the North Somerset Replacement Local Plan. There is therefore no scope to alter and add to the 50% rule in this document.</p>	<p>None</p>

	<p>covered. Also, when the above flexibility is considered then a maximum should also be imposed and therefore I suggest including within that guideline; But an extension will be regarded as disproportionate if it exceeds 100% of the gross floor area of the original house. These additions will clearly assist all who are involved in the planning process and consequently reduce some of the guesswork, wasted resources and cost on all sides especially with time consuming appeals.</p>		
--	--	--	--