

## INTRODUCTION

### Conservation pays

We expect a lot from the houses we live in. We want them to last, to look good, to express our personalities, to provide for or adapt to suit our changing needs, to be economical to maintain and to hold their value - quite a lot to expect of mere buildings.



*This house retains all the character of its age. (Tooting)*

Most of us strive to ensure that our homes and neighbourhoods provide the best possible environment. Unfortunately, objective and independent advice and information on how best to care for houses is not always readily available, and advice is often seen by manufacturers and suppliers as an aid to selling their products, regardless of the type, style, location or construction of a house. With this in mind, the advice and information contained in this guide is aimed at helping householders, whatever type or age of building they live in, to make informed decisions about regular maintenance, recognising and repairing defects, adapting, improving or extending their houses and about using resources. Conserving the fabric of a building and its appearance makes both economic and practical sense, as well as helping it to look its best. At the same time, it helps to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.

This guide contains general advice and describes actual techniques which may help homeowners who feel able to tackle some jobs themselves. However, building construction and maintenance are specialised subjects and often involve large sums of money. Professional advisers can help you get value for money by diagnosing defects and correctly repairing them, designing sympathetic new work, preparing drawings and specifications, obtaining statutory approvals, finding the right contractors or tradespeople, advising on priorities, and controlling the quality of the work.

## INTRODUCTION

### The Building, The Street, The Area

In most built-up areas like Wandsworth few domestic buildings are isolated individuals, even if they are detached, but are part of a street scene, often of houses of similar style and size, though not necessarily identical. So, altering the appearance, form or size of any one house can affect not only the house itself, but the whole street. Generally speaking, the more similar a house is to its neighbours, and the closer together they stand, the less tolerant they are of even minor change to the street appearance.



*What can happen with misguided craving for individuality and alterations which don't even match each other*



For example, a terrace of houses, which is in effect one long building with many doorways, will have its overall appearance spoilt if one part is roofed, painted, glazed or fenced differently from the other parts. The more haphazard changes occur within the group, the more it suffers as a whole, and the more groups or terraces affected, the more the whole street or neighbourhood suffers. We recognise this in, for example, a group of picturesque stone cottages or a grand Regency terrace, but it also applies to the simple brick or stucco-fronted terrace of almost any time or place.

The Government recognises that "Public opinion is now overwhelmingly in favour of conserving and enhancing the familiar and cherished local scene." This is something which can be achieved by local people themselves, and it is they who benefit from it.

## INTRODUCTION

### Change and ageing of buildings

Most people in Wandsworth live in older houses in which several generations have lived before. Most of these older buildings have undergone numerous changes in their lives, as they have aged or decayed, been repaired or altered, or extended. Generally speaking, looking after the building is a matter of preventing or slowing down decay, ensuring that repairs are carried out correctly or remedying poor work, and avoiding alterations which harm the building's character or appearance. If the building has been altered badly, careful reinstatement may not be simple or 100% successful, but usually a great deal can be done to bring out its original appearance.

Decay occurs in all building materials as a natural process. It is the gradual, graceful decay of the surfaces of materials which gives old buildings their distinctive character, quite apart from the period or style of their architecture. The objective of conservation is **not** to make an old building appear new, remove or obscure existing work of quality, alter it back to some assumed earlier appearance, restyle or add superficial ornament, update it or make it look "different" in the false hope that it will look better. Any of these actions are likely to detract from its appearance, character, history and value.



*It can be done! Derelict cottages brought back to life and beauty by comprehensive expert conservation. (Wandsworth)*

### Priorities

When considering repairs and other works to your house, choices frequently need to be made about what to do first, especially when budgets are limited. It is at this stage that professional advice can be most useful. Priority should be given to repairs to the building's fabric, especially any urgent structural work that may be needed, steps to prevent structural movement, "wind and weather-tight" repairs (e.g. roofing, gutters and downpipes, flashings, etc.), the elimination of all sources of water ingress/retention (e.g. rising and penetrating damp, poor pointing, cracked or broken cills, joinery defects, ensuring adequate ventilation of rooms, subfloors, roof spaces, etc.) and measures to deal with fungal decay, beetle attack, removal of defective material, and replacement of suspect plumbing and wiring etc. After these priorities any structural alterations or adaptations, repair/reinstatement of important architectural features, and other improvements, extensions and alterations can be considered.

## DEALING WITH DEFECTS

### Dampness

The old saying “look after the pennies, and the pounds will look after themselves”, is especially apt where buildings are concerned. Major building defects most often arise from neglect, lack of maintenance, poor or incorrect work, which would have cost comparatively little to put right.



*Poor brick repair and loss of the rich cornice have disfigured this house. (Tooting)*

The most common cause of defects and decay is water entry, leading to rot, spalling masonry, mould growth, salt penetration and ultimately structural failure. Therefore the first objective of economic care and conservation is to maintain the building in water-tight condition. Regular inspection and repair of roofs, rainwater or soil disposal systems can prevent very costly remedial work later. Other places where water can enter buildings are defective joints in brick and masonry and around window and door openings, through tops of mouldings, cornices, string courses etc., and around defective flashings. Any green algae or lichen on the surface of a building, often around a downpipe or moulding is a sure sign of leaking, dripping or splashing water. Such occurrences should be remedied without delay.

Rising damp is caused by lack of a damp proof course, its failure or bridging for example by a higher earth level, an adjoining wall, or render. Remedies can include insertion of a physical damp-proof course or a chemically injected damp barrier in the masonry and usually involve internal work. If your house had a damp proof course originally, check for the cause of failure and remedy it if possible.

## DEALING WITH DEFECTS



*Structural cracking from long term movement can still be repaired*

### **Structural movement**

Structural movement can be due to a variety of causes, including subsidence or the reverse, heave, movement in an adjoining building, failure of a structural member or long-term effects of weather. Most houses in London are built on shrinkable clay or other soils where some minimal movement is normal. If a building which has been stable for many years suddenly shows signs of movement, the cause should be investigated. However, there is seldom any need for emergency action. Monitoring should be carried out over a period of time to determine the direction, rate and cause of movement, and is generally a job for specialists. The Council's Building Control Division should be consulted on any sign of serious structural movement or potential failure.

Trees are often unjustifiably suspected of causing structural movement, and tree roots are cited as causing damage to drainage systems. Tree roots very seldom cause mechanical damage to drainage, although if drains are defective, the roots will be attracted to the additional source of water and nutrient. If a house is built on shrinkable sub-soil such as clay, a large tree near the house may absorb a great deal of water from the soil causing it to shrink, and the foundation to subside. The amount of water taken up by tree roots is a function of its "leaf area", therefore any threat may be reduced by such measures as thinning and crown reduction. The Council has published a Guide to the Care and Maintenance of Trees and a list of approved tree surgeons. Ground heave and structural cracking may result from felling a large tree near a building, since the water take-up will abruptly cease, and the resulting soil expansion can damage foundations.

## DEALING WITH DEFECTS

*Dampness – leading to decay, rot and failure of materials*



### **Timber decay**

Wet and dry rot fungi which can destroy timber require certain conditions in which to grow, principally moisture, darkness and moderate temperature. If these are denied, the fungi cannot develop. Ensuring adequate ventilation and avoiding leaks in the building fabric or plumbing are essential and low cost measures to prevent damage. Maintaining paint or other protection on external timber is equally important. Pests which eat timber are commonly the larvae of various species of beetle. Warning signs include small holes in the timber and powdery deposits.

Prevention and treatment for most types of dampness, timber decay or pest attack are available and specialist firms can usually inspect and report on premises free of charge, in expectation of carrying out any work. If in doubt however, independent advice should be sought. An aid to preventive maintenance is to develop a checklist for your particular property, with inspection intervals for each item related to a typical maintenance cycle, e.g. check gutters, downpipes and drains twice yearly, roofs, exterior decoration, gates and fences yearly, pointing and external plaster five-yearly etc.

## BUILDING REPAIRS

### Walls

As in London generally, most houses in Wandsworth are of brick construction, though there may be stone dressings or carving, cast stone elements, ornamental plasterwork, roughcast, slate or tile hanging, stucco or other techniques augmenting the basic construction. Generally, 19th century or earlier brick and masonry is built in lime mortar, Portland cement only coming into use for pointing, roughcast or render late in the century. This “soft” construction, compared to that used in new buildings, is why an old building can move to some degree with changes in soil conditions or for other reasons without cracking or structural instability, and why bricks from these buildings can often be salvaged for re-use. The intended appearance of the original wall finishes, including types of pointing, should not be changed unless there are compelling structural reasons. Purpose-made facing brick should not be covered with any other material such as artificial stone cladding or pebble dashing, which can seriously harm the appearance and structure of the building. Walls intended to be roughcast or rendered would reveal poor quality brick and jointing if stripped.

*A bad neighbour –  
harmful stuck-on cladding – not now  
permitted in conservation areas*



## BUILDING REPAIRS

*The brickwork in the lower half of this photo is new, carefully matched to the original*



### Brick Repair

Brick repairs should be carried out in a brick which matches the original wall in all respects. This is not always easy. Many old brick varieties were made with local clays no longer obtainable or only manufactured by specialist producers. Modern metric bricks are smaller than most old Imperial sizes and may not be suitable in texture or colour, as the old ones may have been handmade and fired differently. The most successful repairs may be achieved with matching bricks from a hidden part of the building itself, although historic fabric should not be lightly sacrificed. If this is not possible, the alternatives are :

- (a) a matching second-hand brick.
- (b) cutting out or taking down sections of defective walling and then reversing the face, so that the undamaged inner face is presented to the exterior - a measure to be considered only in cases of extensive damage to the wall.
- (c) a specially manufactured copy from suppliers who cater for this limited market.
- (d) "plastic" repair in a matching mortar, properly bonded to the defective brick after it has been cut back to sound material. This is not generally recommended for other than small areas where it is not desirable to disturb the surrounding brickwork. Correct colour, strength and texture must be obtained by experiment before proceeding.
- (e) insertion of slips, thin sections specially made or cut from whole bricks, after cutting back the faces of severely damaged bricks to sufficient depth - this is not easy to carry out satisfactorily and is a task for specialists.

Cracks in brickwork or other finishes can be repaired using grouting or bonding techniques; however professional advice should be sought on the cause of the crack and the appropriate repair method.

## BUILDING REPAIRS



*An unaltered group of cottage style houses, finished in unpainted roughcast, but with a poorly matched repair*

### **Special Bricks**

Special bricks, such as those for gauged arches, mouldings, splays, bullnoses, glazed bricks, etc. may need to be manufactured to order. Special craft skills and mortars are used in the cutting and assembly of these features.

### **Other wall finishes**

For plaster, stucco, terracotta, render or roughcast repair, the general principle is first to determine the composition of the original, then cut out the defective work and use a material which matches the original in strength and finish, ensuring it is properly bonded.

### **Mortar**

Mortar used for brick repair should be weaker than the bricks themselves; a mix of 1 part portland cement, 3 parts lime, preferably made from lime putty and 12 parts sand is suitable in most circumstances for 19th century buildings but may need to vary with the age, type of brick, original bedding mortar and degree of exposure.

### **Pointing**

Pointing mortar should be of no stronger mix than 1 cement, 1 lime and 6 sand, and colour, texture and type of joint are crucial to the success of the repair. Many buildings have been spoilt by non-matching pointing repairs or by the whole face being repointed unnecessarily and/or in an inappropriate manner. Incorrect pointing can not only harm appearance, it can accelerate decay and lead to major defects. It is especially important that pointing repair in terraced houses exactly matches the original, to maintain the unity of the group. Walls should be examined for evidence of good original pointing, to be used as a model for repair. Well bonded existing pointing should not be removed, as this is likely to damage the brick arrises. Strong cement mortar should not be used.

## BUILDING REPAIRS



*The destruction of an Edwardian house  
(Putney)*

### **Paint and other coatings**

Never paint original brick or stonework, or apply commercial coatings of any kind. The natural material and mortar is invariably more attractive and requires less maintenance. Surface coatings may trap moisture and cause serious damage to walls. Frequent, costly redecoration will be necessary. Pointing or other repairs will be more difficult and it may be harder to recognise any defects. Similarly, rendering, pebbledashing or other commercial surfacing are likely to be irreversible, often obscure original architectural detail, can lead to structural or dampness problems and are always bad neighbours, spoiling the appearance of the street.

### **Paint removal and cleaning of brickwork**

Many paints and other finishes, as well as excessive grime, can be successfully removed by specialists at moderate cost. This may involve the use of strong chemicals and should not be undertaken by the amateur. Initial advice can be obtained from the Council, who may also grant-aid paint removal in certain circumstances. Coarse abrasive or grit blasting techniques should not be used to clean brickwork or remove paint, as they are liable to damage the brick surface permanently.

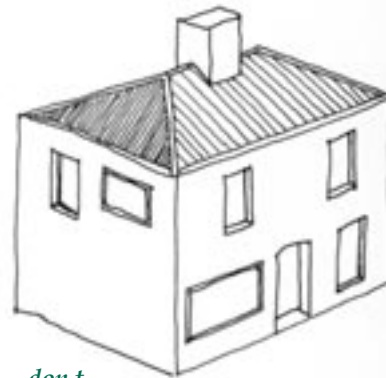


*Identical buildings before and  
after cleaning (Tooting, Battersea)*

## BUILDING REPAIRS



*do*



*don,t*

*New openings in walls should retain the proportions of the originals as shown on the right.*

*Original timber doors should not be replaced with any different pattern, size or material such as UPVC or aluminium. Repair or have them copied if necessary*

### Windows, Doors and Joinery

The arrangement of openings in the walls of a building should give it an attractive and well ordered appearance as well as lighting the interiors. Typically, the greatest effort is concentrated on the front elevation, but every face of a building can be important to its overall character. The elements which make up the doors or windows are:

(a) size in relation to the total wall area. Buildings vary greatly in this respect, some having large windows giving generous light while others have smaller, but more numerous windows.

(b) proportion - the relationship of height to width. Most traditional houses have windows with a vertical emphasis, often greater than twice as high as they are wide.

(c) material - most windows in traditional houses are of timber construction, although some are iron or steel framed.

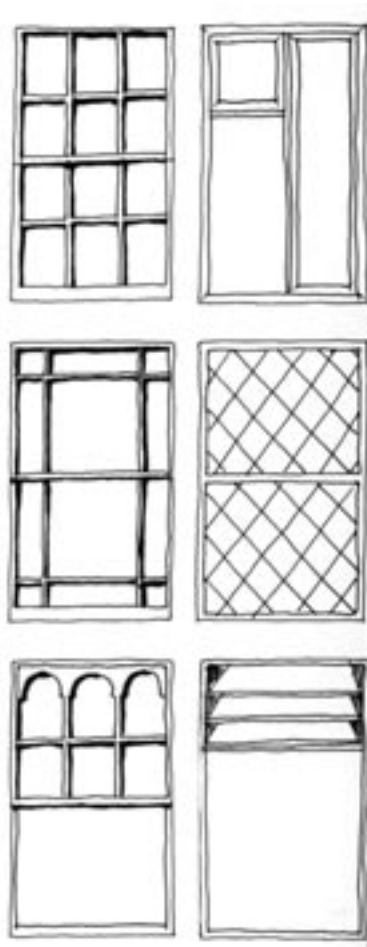
Virtually all doors are timber.

(d) type or pattern - Most opening windows in older houses are either double hung sashes or side hung casements. One type should never be substituted for another, nor should a different style be introduced, either as replacements or in new openings. "Off the peg" windows or doors are only suitable if they match originals in general appearance and detail, and are not different in size, as any alteration to the size of the opening will be expensive and likely to spoil the whole elevation.



## BUILDING REPAIRS

*Original windows (illustrated left)  
should not be replaced by ones of a  
totally different nature (right column)*



### Repair or Replace Windows?

Repair of existing windows is preferable to the installation of replacement windows. Properly maintained, timber windows will last indefinitely, as will iron. Early steel windows are more prone to decay, but matching replacements can usually be obtained with better factory protection. If it is necessary to replace a timber window, it should be of the same pattern. A joiner can use the original as the pattern or, if previously replaced incorrectly, use the opportunity to reinstate it from historical evidence. Old glass, which has a different appearance to modern glass, should be saved for re-use. Windows should be refitted in the original positions in the opening, i.e. the depth of reveals should not alter, and any new openings and windows constructed to match them. Installation of secondary windows can achieve the benefits of double glazing without adversely affecting the appearance of the building.

*Window alterations like this are bad  
neighbours, devalue the house and  
will not be permitted if applied for  
(Battersea)*



## BUILDING REPAIRS

The cost of double-glazed replacement windows is unlikely to be recovered in heat saving over the design life of the windows, and sealed units can lead to condensation problems. Upvc or aluminium replacement windows should be avoided in traditional buildings and may devalue them:

(a) they cannot reproduce the dimensions and detailing of even simple traditional windows completely accurately, and complex glazing bar patterns, curved or delicately moulded sections, etc., are impossible. Glass in large sheets, even if false glazing bars are applied, can give a deadening effect to the elevation.

(b) a variety of different systems on a street of similar houses will eventually spoil the whole group.

(c) they are not necessarily maintenance-free and if damaged or defective, repair or replacement may be difficult or expensive.

**Safety Note:** Windows can be a principal means of escape in an emergency such as fire. Never replace the only opening window in a room with a fixed one, and always ensure that keys to locks will be immediately to hand if an emergency arises.



*Replacing original windows with different patterns or materials is expensive, visually inferior and can devalue property*

## BUILDING REPAIRS

### Roofs

After the walls, the roof of a building is its largest and most prominent element. Its form, pitch, detailing and materials result partly from the overall need to make the building weathertight, but also partly from the architectural design and whether the roofspace is designed to contain habitable accommodation.

In Wandsworth, nearly all traditional roofs are covered in slate or clay tile, sometimes with ornament or detail in other materials such as lead or copper. Slates and tiles vary in colour and size, and tiles in pattern as well. Where a roof meets a wall, parapet or chimney stack, there is usually a stepped lead flashing to weatherproof the joint. Hips and ridges may be covered with lead rolls or special tiles. Ornamental ridge tiles and clay or lead finials are not uncommon.

Slate is an extremely durable material with a long life if properly maintained. Failure is most frequently due to rotting fixing nails or battens, and a large proportion of slates can usually be salvaged for re-use, allowing renewal in the original material at reasonable cost. Missing slates can be made up with second-hand. It is important to obtain the correct size to match the original. Any decorative elements should be carefully removed and replaced on completion. Lead detailing or ornament should be replaced, or if lost in the past, reinstated. Decorative patterns should be repeated when repairing or recovering. If cost saving is crucial, and salvaged slates cannot be obtained, a good quality artificial slate may be satisfactory when viewed from the street. Inferior products should be avoided.

*Ornamental detail on ridges and gable apex as here, should always be conserved, not removed*



*Carefully restored roof, brick, ornament and windows – a credit to any area. (Wandsworth)*

## BUILDING REPAIRS

*Detail of a new clay tiled roof*



Clay tiles come in many shapes and sizes, the most common being small and plain. Larger varieties include pantiles, interlocking rolls or Bridgewater tiles. The best quality are handmade, but most are machine made. As with slate, retaining original detailing and replacement or reinstatement of any ornament should be the aim, and repair or recovering should be in the original material.

Alternative roofing materials may save on initial outlay, but may be incorrect for the pitch of the roof, too heavy for the existing roof structure, less durable, or harmful to the appearance of the house or street. Remember that if the unity of the street is one of its features, every different roof material or colour will detract further from this unity, and the whole street will suffer.



*Contrasting roof material and obvious join spoils the group (Roehampton)*

Selecting the correct colour for repairs or renewals is extremely important. If appropriate salvaged materials are not available, it is generally best to choose new supplies of the original colour as when it was new, since these will eventually weather to match their surroundings, whereas a colour which may be closer initially may weather to a completely different shade. If new material looks too harsh it can sometimes be toned in, which will not affect its long-term appearance. The original colour of a tile can be ascertained from its underside, and any replacements compared with it. Previous use of non-matching or inferior materials such as concrete tiles can of course be reversed, although it may be expensive. The Council may be prepared to grant aid suitable cases.

## BUILDING REPAIRS

### Rainwater Disposal and other External Pipes

Gutters, rainwater and soil pipes are usually of cast iron, but are frequently being replaced in other materials. As with a roof, it is very important to keep them in good repair, as leaks can lead to severe damage from water penetration, such as timber rot, decaying plaster and spalling stone or brick. In many cases local defects or damage can be repaired with a matching length or joint of pipe or gutter. If replacement is necessary, matching sections should be obtained. Cast aluminium guttering is made to match the most common cast iron originals, and will not rust. PVC replacements may not be available to the same profile as the original, may become brittle with age and are easily damaged. There may be opportunities to simplify the layout of any external pipes.



*Defective gutters and pipes have caused severe damage to this listed house. (Wandsworth)*

## BUILDING REPAIRS



*Richness, gaiety and craftsmanship in ornament speak silently of life long ago*

### Other Features and Ornament

These are often the distinctive parts of a building and add considerably to the attractiveness of a house. They may represent a higher degree of individual craftsmanship, although sometimes the simplest houses are the better crafted because they do not attempt to look grander than they are, and money has been spent on sound construction instead. A building's ornament is an essential part of its original design, and the outward appearance will invariably suffer if it is not retained and kept in good repair. Elements such as moulded cornices, console brackets, string courses, column capitals, moulded or carved brick, decorative tiles, metalwork, stained glass, intricate timberwork, a special painting scheme, unusual terracotta work or chimney pots all fit into this category. Repair or reinstatement may be more difficult, as specialised techniques or commissioning reproductions may be involved. However, they are usually understood and known to professionals in the conservation field and suppliers or craftspeople can be found to undertake the work. The Council may be able to assist in some circumstances, and has information on suppliers and craftspeople.

Other elements which contribute to the external appearance should not be altered or replaced with other than an exact replica wherever possible, nor should additions be made which are out of keeping. Patterned brickwork, precision gauged arches, carved lintels, original number plates, boot scrapers, bell pulls and all ironmongery, stone steps, cast hopper heads, etc., should not be overlooked. Chimneys are an important part of traditional British townscape and the main stacks of any house should always be retained, even if they are no longer in use. A ventilation cap may be fitted. Copings on walls or parapets, original paving to paths, or early outdoor lighting should be treated the same. Any new lighting should also be sensitive to the period and style of the house.

## BUILDING REPAIRS

### External Painting - Joinery and Metalwork

Except for front doors white has become the predominant colour for exterior joinery, while black is usual for metalwork. This convention provides unity in a group and there is no difficulty in subsequent colour matching. If other colours are chosen, they should be historically correct for the period. Lurid or primary colours were never intended on old buildings or most modern ones. If a rendered or roughcast wall was intended to be painted, the colour should be as near as possible to the original, and the paint selected should still allow walls to "breathe". Rendering was often intended to resemble stone ashlar, and any old work of this type should not be painted, but repaired in matching colour and finish.

### Services and Other External Fixings

Service connections for gas, electricity, telephone or television, can all disfigure a building. Cables or pipes should not be run up or across the face of a building. Conventional TV antennae can be located in loft spaces. Satellite antennae require planning permission in certain circumstances, and should not be located at the front of the house. The Council has approved guidelines on the installation of telecommunications equipment. Service boxes should not be placed in a prominent position. The location of boxes or other apparatus is at the discretion of building owners and not suppliers or installers. Service boxes are now available which can be set into the ground, so that nothing need be mounted on the building at all, or they can be retained internally.

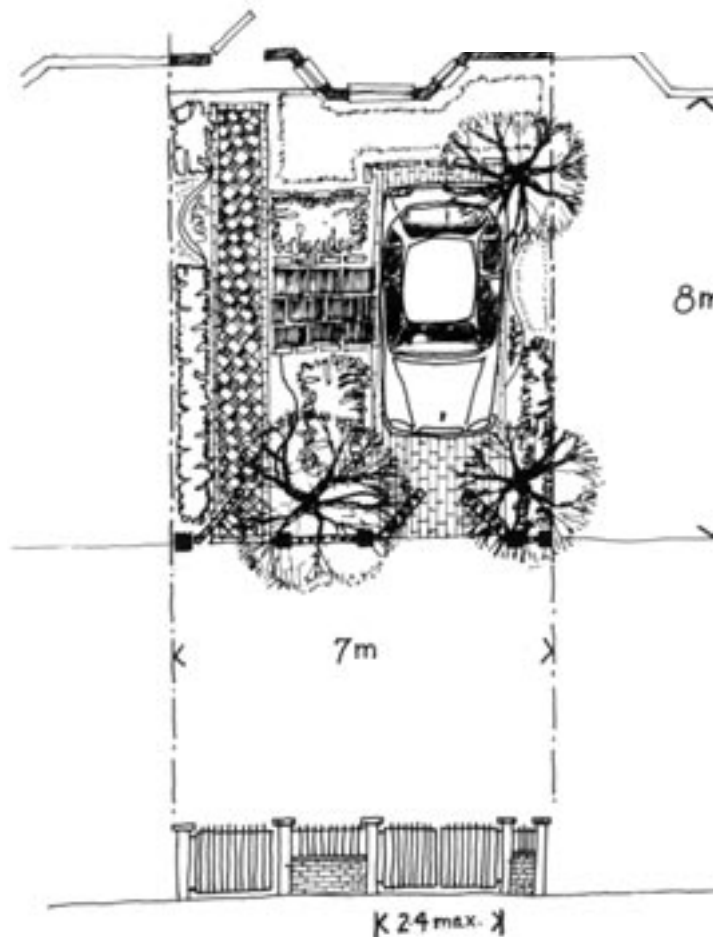


*All such eyesores as these should be avoided on any principal elevation*

Climbing plants can be very attractive, but certain species can damage masonry and mortar joints. Any fixings should be carefully and firmly secured within mortar joints to avoid damage to facework.

## GARDENS AND OTHER EXTERNAL AREAS

*Front gardens less than these dimensions are unlikely to accommodate a car without harm to house and street scene*



The front garden whatever its size provides an opportunity to soften or enhance the look of the building. This is largely a matter of taste, though paths, edging, ornament, etc, should retain the original materials, reinstate them, or introduce those which would not have been out of place when the house was built. The treatment of a front garden can also increase a sense of seclusion, or aid security. The Council has published Design Guidelines on Personal Safety and Security. The design of rear gardens is generally a matter of personal taste, though their appearance can also contribute to the character of an area.

Generally, only the front gardens of larger villas designed for carriages, or those with drives and garages can easily accommodate cars. With smaller houses and gardens, the setting of the house and character of the street and area will suffer greatly if cars dominate the frontage. Unless special circumstances, such as access for the disabled, outweigh normal criteria, no attempt should be made to accommodate a car in a front garden unless there is sufficient width not to interfere with the original path, and sufficient depth to erect inward opening gates which can be closed when the car is parked. Hard surfacing should be kept to a minimum, be in a sympathetic material, and leave sufficient space for shrubs and other planting close-by. Approval of the Borough Engineer must be sought for all crossovers from a public highway.



*The importance of front gardens and boundaries to the street scene cannot be overstated.*

## GARDENS AND OTHER EXTERNAL AREAS

### Trees

Trees are valued for their own beauty and can make a valuable contribution to the setting of almost any building. It is important however when considering any planting to take account not only of the aesthetic quality of trees, but of other factors such as eventual size, spread, speed of growth, moisture take-up, rooting system and other factors, to ensure that the trees will continue to provide enjoyment and not become a nuisance or danger to your building or your neighbour's. The Council's Guide to the Care and Maintenance of Trees is available on request.

### Boundaries

Boundaries, especially those to the street, are an essential feature of any property. They may be a simple hedge, post and rail, or an elaborate design in brick, stone and ornamental iron. Whatever the case, they are very important to the attractiveness of a street. Original boundary treatments, especially those built for a group of houses, should not be altered or demolished, and every effort should be made to reinstate missing boundaries. If original boundaries (e.g. front railings) have been lost, reinstatement is often possible from photographic evidence, or by copying surviving examples elsewhere in the street. If no evidence can be found, a design in the appropriate period style is usually the best alternative. In some areas of the Borough, schemes of iron railing replacement, to original types lost during the Second World War are being promoted by the Council. Where a whole group, terrace or estate has been designed to have uniform front boundaries, alteration of any kind is a bad neighbour which will spoil the street scene. Planning permission is required for the erection of any form of boundary fence, wall or railing over 1 metre high on any highway frontage, or 2 metres high elsewhere. In conservation areas consent may be required to demolish walls etc..



*Any style of railing or gate can be reinstated where missing. Original pattern railings (as illustrated) have been newly manufactured for a conservation area (Tooting).*

## REINSTATEMENT OF ORIGINAL FEATURES



*The entire ground floor front of this listed building on the right, has been reinstated following removal of a modern cafe shopfront (Wandsworth)*

### Grants

While repairs to the original fabric of a building are always preferred, features of a house which have been lost can be reinstated and unsympathetic or poor quality additions removed. This will enhance its appearance and value. In cases where the character or appearance of a listed building or conservation area would be enhanced, the Council (and in certain circumstances other bodies) may be prepared to provide grant aid. Even if substantial change too difficult or costly to remove has already occurred it may still be possible to carry out some works (for example roof material, joinery, front boundary treatment, landscape etc.) to enhance a house and its setting in relation to its neighbours.



*By contrast, a lovely doorcase was removed, and the scar rendered over, where there was no control over it. (Putney)*

## MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS

Most houses undergo many changes in their lifetime, to suit the needs of successive occupants. One of the benefits of this type of dwelling is that they are so adaptable internally. If the building is not of special architectural or historic importance, this is largely a matter of taste and convenience, although it is still desirable to retain the well-crafted original internal features which go to make up the character and integrity of a house, whatever its period. Existing ventilation should not be removed or sealed. Any structural alteration, for example removing an internal structural-wall or chimney breast, will need Building Control approval. The advice of suitably qualified professionals should be sought before embarking on any major or costly work.

*It would be difficult to imagine a less harmonious addition than this one.  
(Balham)*

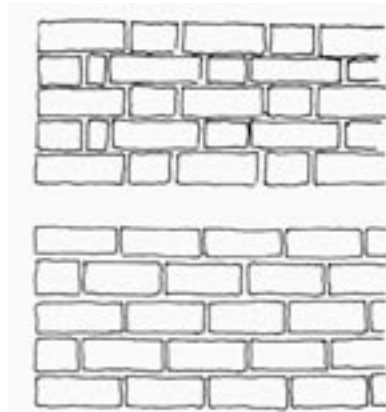


When major changes are being considered to the external envelope the public aspects may be affected. Oversized or poorly designed extensions not suited to the original building are one of the main causes of damage to the streetscene. It is often possible however to alter or extend a property without harm to its character – indeed it can add to the interest of a building when its form has evolved over a period of time. Success depends upon striking the right balance between adaptation and sensitivity to the original design. The “golden rules” to follow when planning any alteration or addition are that, when completed, the work should appear as if it could have been part of the original design, that the building is once again a complete and harmonious whole, that it does not look out of place in relation to its neighbours or surroundings, and that it preserves the amenities of houseowner and neighbour alike.

## MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS



*This extension has been done so carefully as to be almost unnoticeable*



*The solid brick walls of older houses are usually built in Flemish Bond (above), while modern cavity walls are in stretcher bond (below). The bond in new work should match that of the existing, especially on principal elevations*

### Style

It is partly a matter of style – ie. copying the form, materials, details and ornament of the existing building in the design of the new elements. The best examples of this approach are those which are not noticed at all – they appear always to have been there:

(a) The form of a building is its overall shape, the proportions, heights and lengths of its walls, arrangement of openings, angle of pitch of its roofs, etc. Extending the existing form of a wall might mean, for example, incorporating projections or setbacks in the brickwork to reflect the existing elevation. Roofs over extensions should be the same type as those of the original house, (e.g. hipped, gabled, mansarded, etc.) and of the same pitch. Different roof types or pitches on the same building can make the whole unattractive, while flat roofed extensions to pitched roofed houses rarely succeed.

(b) Using exactly the same materials as the original building is most likely to produce a successful extension. This may require skill, and determination not to accept second best. Specialist advice should be sought where necessary, and the Council may be able to help.

(c) The details of the existing building construction should be repeated in any extension to give a unified appearance to the building. This includes brick bond – the pattern made by the joints - traditional solid walls of older houses are usually constructed in Flemish Bond, while houses with cavity walls are generally in Stretcher or Running Bond; band courses in brickwork; openings and corners - contrasting stone or brick dressings may be used - gauged or turned brick arches, stone lintels, moulded plaster, etc.; eaves; and ornament - if a house possesses distinctive ornament any extension which omitted it would probably look unsatisfactory. Certain ornamental elements, such as decorative chimney pots, balcony railings, terracotta finials or ridge tiles, moulded bricks, etc., were mass produced and may still be obtainable from specialist manufacturers or as architectural salvage. Others, such as carved stonework or decorative plaster, may need to be reproduced by craftspeople. The Council may be able to help, and there are commercial directories of such firms.

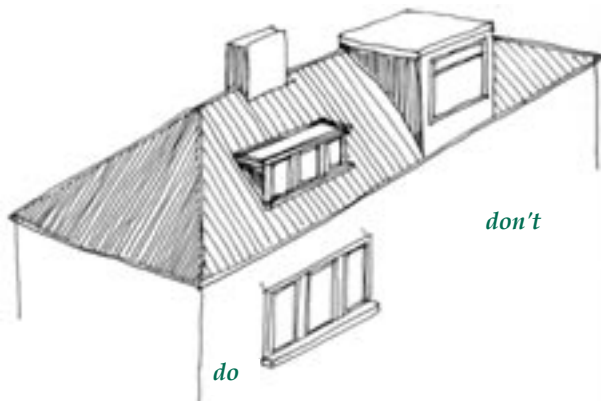
## MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS



*A new dormer – well matched to the original gable (Balham)*



*An original dormer – good examples reflect the style and proportions of the house*



*A new dormer should be carefully matched in scale and proportion to the existing house*

If elements which are not part of the original house, a dormer for example, are proposed, they should be designed in the manner of those of the same period and style, possibly using examples from similar houses.

A less usual approach is deliberately to distinguish the new work from the old, allowing contemporary solutions to be adopted in traditional buildings. This is generally applicable only to larger additions and requires exceptional skill on the part of the designer to ensure that the whole building remains a harmonious and attractive composition. A third approach, if the function permits and the house plot is large enough, is a detached building, such as a garage or studio.

### Other principles

Other factors determining what kind of extension may be acceptable include:

- (a) size – an extension should not be so large as to dominate the existing building or the street scene;
- (b) overdevelopment – the amount of accommodation relative to the plot size, proximity to the boundary, and density (i.e. number of rooms per acre) of development – extensions should not compromise original garden settings, and those which cover more than half the length of the garden are unlikely to be acceptable;
- (c) the amenity of neighbours, including the effect on sunlight, daylight and outlook, potential overlooking and noise.

Where the Council exercises planning control, permission will not normally be granted for schemes which are detrimental to the overall street appearance or which do not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas or listed buildings.

## MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS



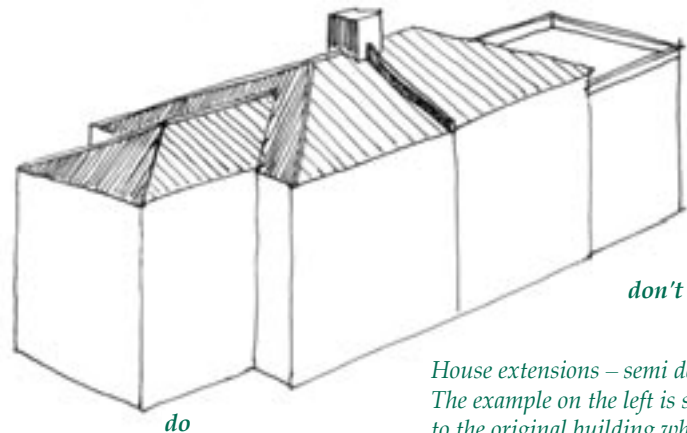
*Bin stores should be unobtrusive or even dispensed with – and certainly not block entrances*

### **Different Types of Additions/Extensions - Detailed Guidance**

Front: Additions at the front are seldom successful and should only be attempted in streets where houses are dissimilar. Enclosed porches which are out of keeping with the style of building, or disrupt the rhythm of a group of similar houses, are generally harmful. Garages or other extensions which project forward from the main front wall are likely to be over-dominant and disrupt views down the street. Sheds and other ancillary buildings are normally not acceptable in front gardens.

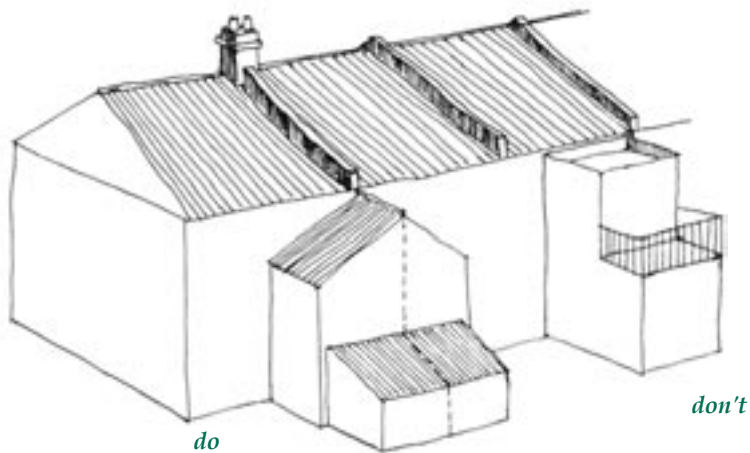
Bin stores at the fronts of houses require planning permission and should be avoided at front boundaries or immediately adjacent to an entrance. There is often no need for them at all if bins are sited unobtrusively at the side or behind a hedge. Where conversions give rise to a need for several bin stores, the Council will seek a design which is least obtrusive and still permits an attractive boundary to be retained or reinstated.

Flank: It is often possible to extend houses at the sides, provided there is enough space and the extension will not create a “terraced” effect in a street of individual buildings. The design should extend the style of the existing building and the extension should not dominate or compete with the house.



*House extensions – semi detached.  
The example on the left is sympathetic to the original building whereas the one on the right clashes*

## MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS



*House extensions – terraces (rear only)  
Again, the example on the left is the  
better of the two*

Rear: Generally the rear offers most scope for additions but it is still important to maintain an architectural unity, within both the house and the group. Roofs of extensions should follow the same form and pitch as those of the main roof. Flat roofed extensions to traditional buildings are seldom harmonious and they can lead to defects. Roof terraces overlooking neighbouring properties are not acceptable. Some form of pitched or hipped roof is normally possible though care should be taken to avoid worsening the effect on light to neighbouring properties. Roof material should be that of the main house, but must in any case be appropriate for the pitch e.g. plain tiles should be at 45° or above, while slate can be used down to about 25°, and metal roofs such as lead, copper or zinc down to very shallow pitches. Proportions and detailing of openings and windows should follow those of the main house. Conservatory extensions should also be thought of as part of the overall house design. Form, materials, scale and proportion of various elements should harmonise with the main house. Avoid the temptation to over embellish if the house itself is a simple design.



*Radical changes to roof shapes, flat  
roofed extensions and terraces over-  
looking neighbours are not acceptable*

## MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS

*Oversize dormers and bulky roof extensions are unacceptable. (Battersea, Roehampton)*



### Roof Extensions

Roof extensions at the front of a house, certain rear or side extensions and all extensions in conservation areas need planning permission. Alterations to the roof profile can be particularly sensitive and the overall shape of the roof should not be altered, especially in a group of similar houses. Rooflights or small dormer windows can be an appropriate way of lighting roofspace, especially at the rear, but the scale and proportions of any dormers should reflect those of the house as a whole, and adopt the same materials and roof pattern as the house itself and/or other sensitively-designed dormers in the group. They should be placed well away from the eaves and flank or party walls and below the ridge. Oversized dormers or bulky extensions intended to create substantial additional space are unacceptable. Roof extensions are not generally acceptable on front elevations unless they can be well set back behind an existing parapet with minimal impact on the street scene.



*A front gable has been demolished to make way for this eyesore. (Southfields)*

### Garages and Car-ports

If there is space for a garage extension to the house, its design and materials, including garage door and roof shape, should harmonize with the house. Even where it is to be detached and not easily seen from the road, this approach, although more expensive than a prefab, can enhance appearance and value. A lean-to or "coach house" type of garage on the flank should be set back from the front of the house. Forward projections are unlikely to be acceptable visually and could detract from neighbours' amenity. A car-port of simple design and sympathetic materials may be satisfactory if it does not detract from or obscure the house itself. Car ports on front forecourts are not normally acceptable.

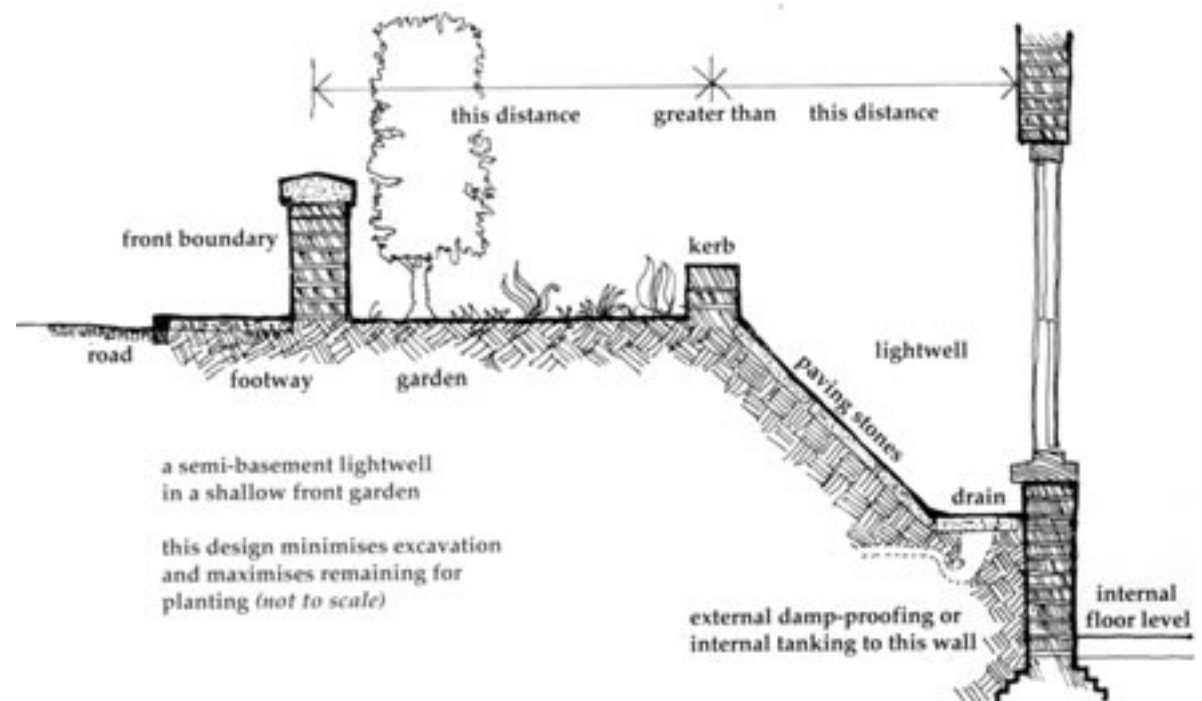
### Extensions on or near the boundary

You will need a Party Wall Agreement if you wish to alter, demolish, build onto or fix any other structure to an existing party wall. When planning any other extension or garage close to the boundary, you should give consideration to the question of access for maintenance and to the layout of gutters and downpipes to avoid them oversailing your neighbour's property.

## MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS

### Basements and Lightwells

In rare cases, it may be possible to excavate a basement or semi-basement to enlarge a house provided that the depth of the existing foundations is established beforehand and the work is agreed in advance both with neighbours and the Building Control Division. The impact on the appearance of the building and streetscene will be taken into account by the Council when determining any planning application. Enlarging a lightwell at the front or altering the front elevation and windows to comply with lighting standards can detract from the appearance of both the building and the front garden. Changes to front elevations arising from excavation of lightwells should match the original building, and at least half of the front garden depth should remain, properly landscaped with its original or reinstated front boundary treatment. Excavations must not adversely affect services under the footway and a retaining wall will be needed to carry the surcharge load of road traffic. In areas of the Borough where basements are liable to flooding new habitable floorspace should not be created in basements.



## STATUTORY APPROVALS



*Unauthorised work to a listed building is an offence*

Planning Permission must be sought for certain kinds of extensions, while smaller ones and certain minor works may be exempt for single dwelling houses. While every possibility cannot be covered in a guide of of this kind, general guidance is given in a leaflet published by the Council. If you have a flat, planning permission will be required for any form of extension. All planning applications are considered on their individual merit, against the requirements of the law, government and Council policy, the effect of the proposal on amenity etc. and the appearance of the street or area. Within conservation areas greater control over appearance is exercised. The Council will normally consult neighbours on a planning application. Council officers can advise on whether a proposal is likely to be acceptable, and may be able to offer specific design advice or suggest ways of overcoming objections.

In addition, consent is required with certain minor exceptions for demolition of any building or part of a building in a conservation area. Consent will not normally be granted if loss of part of the area's valued character or appearance would result, or if there are no approved plans for a replacement.

The strictest control is applied in respect of any building included in the statutory list of Buildings of Architectural and Historic Interest. Any alterations including such matters as painting or minor internal change require Listed Building Consent if they are likely to affect the character of the building. The Council also has powers to secure repairs to listed buildings in severe disrepair.

It is an offence to alter or demolish a listed building or part of one, or any other building or fixed object within its curtilage in a manner affecting its character without Listed Building Consent, or to demolish a building or part of one in a conservation area without Conservation Area Consent. The Council must be notified of any