

**APPROVED**

# Roof Alterations & Extensions

SPG<sup>BH</sup>  
note 1  
supplementary planning guidance

## What is an SPG?

A Supplementary Planning Guidance Note (SPG) is one of many material considerations that can be taken into account when determining a planning application. It is intended to provide helpful guidance for the developer, consistent with the provisions of the statutory Local Plan. This SPG Note is one of a series produced by the Environmental Services Department and it is to be read in conjunction with the Council's statutory local plan(s). The guidance is also based on that contained in the Government's Planning Policy Guidance Note PPG15 – Planning and the Historic Environment, and English Heritage's Listed Buildings Guidance Leaflets on Mansard Roofs and Dormers.

This Guidance Note was approved by the Land Use, Transportation and Highways Management Sub-Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1999 following public consultation and consequential amendment, as a material consideration for the purposes of development control. It supplements policies BE1, BE5, BE6, BE8, BE9, BE12 and BE19 of the Hove Borough Local Plan 1995, policies ENV.1, ENV.3, ENV.5, ENV.6, ENV.22, ENV.31 and ENV.40 of the Brighton Borough Local Plan 1995 and policies B.2, B.16, B.19 and B.20 of the Brighton and Hove Local Plan Review Part A, which was published for development control purposes in 1997.

## Introduction

It is the firm belief of the Council that good design should be the aim of any alterations and additions throughout Brighton and Hove. Poorly designed or excessively bulky roof top additions can seriously harm the appearance of the property and in some cases decrease its value. They can also have a harmful effect on the rest of the street.

A well designed extension or roof conversion, including a carefully designed new stair flight that compliments both the interior proportions and detailing of the house, can increase usable floorspace and may add value to the property.

This Note sets out general advice and principles. It covers all types of roof alteration/ extension, including therefore loft conversions, roof extensions, roof terraces, dormer windows and roof lights. It advises on planning related legislation affecting such works; on broad planning principles that will apply; and offers guidance on detailed design considerations.



**Regency terrace with traditional dormers**

- 1 -

The advice contained in this Note is applicable throughout the city and to all buildings whether or not council approval is required. Where the building is listed, or is in a Conservation Area, it may be inappropriate to add any roof extensions or dormers and planning permission or listed building consent may be refused. Each application for planning permission and/or listed building consent must be considered on its own merits and there may be circumstances where the guidelines cannot be adhered to strictly.

## **DO I NEED COUNCIL APPROVAL?**

The following is a simplification of the rules and it is advisable to check with the Council's Planning Officers at an early stage to confirm which applications are necessary in any particular case. Planning regulations were changed in 1988 to extend controls over roof alterations. It is possible that in the future the Council may introduce additional restrictions in Conservation Areas so as to control all roof alterations, including roof lights and roof materials.

The existing rules are as follows:

### **Buildings outside Conservation Areas and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

Planning permission is not needed to add dormers to single family dwelling houses provided that, they do not face a highway, are no higher than the ridge of the existing roof and that they are below a certain volume. Moreover single family dwelling houses do not require planning permission for roof lights on roof slopes that do not face a highway, or on front roof slopes if they do not extend beyond the plane of the existing roof slope. Single houses do not need permission to change the roof covering.

All external alterations and extensions to commercial buildings or buildings divided into flats will normally require planning permission. This includes roof lights and roof coverings.

### **Buildings within Conservation Areas and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

Planning permission is generally required for all roof alterations.

Single family residential dwelling houses however do not normally require planning permission for roof lights, or to recover the roof, except in some Conservation Areas or streets where 'Article 4 Directions' exist. This advice however is on the basis that roof lights on the front roof slope do not project beyond the plane of the existing roof slope. Please contact a Council Planning Officer for details of the Article 4 Directions.

Enforcement action can be taken when works are carried out without planning permission, which may require for example the removal of a roof light or dormer extension and the reinstatement of the building to its former appearance.



**An unacceptable bulky dormer**

## Listed Buildings

If the building is listed as a building of special architectural or historic interest, listed building consent will always be required for roof alterations and associated internal works. It is a criminal offence to carry out works which affect a listed building's character without consent.

**Note Well:** In cases where alterations to the structure are involved, (including new plumbing/drainage) or where a new room is created, Building Regulations approval is also required.

## PLANNING OR LISTED BUILDING APPLICATION DRAWINGS

Drawings should be clearly and accurately drawn to scale illustrating all external detail and finishes. Photographs are also useful. Elevational drawings should show the whole building in the wider street scene. Sectional drawings will also be required. Drawings should be supplied at a scale of 1:50. Works to listed or other historic buildings may require large scale drawings including, for example, full size drawings of joinery details and 1:20 scale drawings of the proposed window type. A short written statement setting out the design principles adopted will also be required.

## THE DESIGN GUIDANCE: GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

### Residential and visual amenity

Roof extensions or roof terraces will impact on the amenity of adjoining residents and the street scene. Due to the hilly nature of Brighton and Hove works to many rear elevations may also impact on the wider street scene. Roof lights, particularly when duplicated and arranged in a haphazard fashion can also impact on the street.



**Traditional flat topped lead clad dormer**

Therefore, and particularly in Conservation Areas, where the Council has a duty to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area, or other areas identified as having similar townscape merit:

- Roof extensions, terraces or dormers must respect the particular character of the building and be carefully related to it. Some roof spaces will be unsuitable for additional accommodation; for example those with shallow roof pitches and limited roof pitches. Pitched roofs should not be removed to accommodate roof terraces.
- There should be no significant loss of daylight, sunlight, or privacy for adjoining premises.
- Roof lights should be kept as few and as small as possible and should relate well to the scale and proportions of the elevation below. They should not dominate the roof. In order to minimise their impact on the external appearance of the building they are best restricted to rear roof slopes.

- In Conservation Areas, where permission is required, roof lights will not be accepted on the front or other prominent roof slopes of buildings, where they would be visible from the street.
- Interesting features at roof level, for example, stacks, turrets, dormers, party wall upstands, decorative ridge tiles etc should be retained and respected.

## **Uniform Terraces and Groups of Buildings**

Many streets in Brighton and Hove are composed of uniform terraces. Roof alterations would break up the unity of their design. Similarly, where there is a uniform group of semi-detached or detached dwellings, alterations to one or two buildings will stand out and spoil that group.



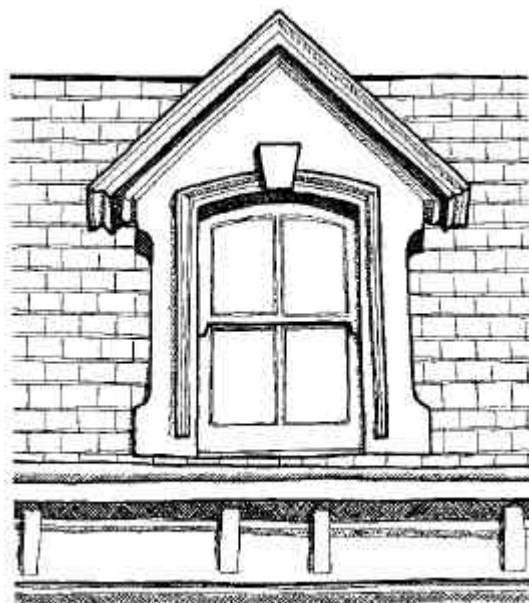
**A uniform terrace disrupted by dormers**

### **In these circumstances:**

- Roof extensions or new dormers will not be permitted on front roof slopes, or other prominent elevations of a building in a uniform terrace or group, when viewed from the street or public open space.
- The presence of a small number of inappropriate roof alterations in the street will not be accepted as evidence of an established precedent. In such cases the Council will seek the removal of unsympathetic additions/alterations, where the works are unauthorised and through negotiation where there are conservation grant schemes for the repair and reinstatement of buildings.
- Where the terrace or group was built with dormers, these original features should not be removed or altered.
- Where a terrace or group was originally designed without roof extensions or dormers, but over the years a majority of the buildings now have them, new extensions and dormers may be acceptable, provided that the new dormers conform to the detailed design criteria set out later in this document. The Council will seek to recreate some sense of unity and coherence to the terrace or group.
- Where one half of a semi-detached house has been altered and this has created an imbalance, a well designed alteration to the other half may be acceptable.
- Altering a roof's basic form or ridge height would not be appropriate.

## Streets with Varied Buildings

Where a street has developed with buildings of varying height and scale, and where a varied roof-line is an important aspect of its character, this should be respected, and any tendency to level up buildings to a uniform height, will be resisted.



**A traditional ornate pedimented dormer**

## Listed Buildings

It is the council's policy to preserve the special character of listed buildings.

Therefore:

- Alterations to roofs of listed buildings will not be granted consent where the special architectural or historic interest of the original building would be harmed.
- The building's historic roof structure and form should be retained.

Traditional dormers or roof lights were located to provide a small amount of daylight and ventilation to the loft or attic rooms, or to provide access onto a valley roof for maintenance purposes. Larger ones were sometimes used to light a stairwell. Lantern lights were often also used where more light was required to stairwells and other areas.

Therefore:

- Existing dormers, rooflights and decorative stairlights, which contribute to the building's character, should not be altered or removed. Where their condition is so poor that they cannot be repaired, they should be replaced in replica with traditional materials.
- One small traditional rooflight unobtrusively sited to light a loft space will normally be permitted. In exceptional circumstances more may be permitted, where they are the only way to give natural light to an unusual building which is to be converted; but only if they are

unobtrusively sited, are not on prominent roof slopes and do not result in the loss of or damage to any historic roof structure.

Because the interiors of all grades of Listed Buildings are protected, the internal impact of roof conversion is also a matter of concern to the Council, and the means of access to the roof space and any consequential alterations to the floor(s) below must be carefully considered.

Therefore:

- Loft conversions will only be acceptable where the historic roof structure is to remain intact and the new staircase would not harm the proportions or features of an important room or landing/stairway below.

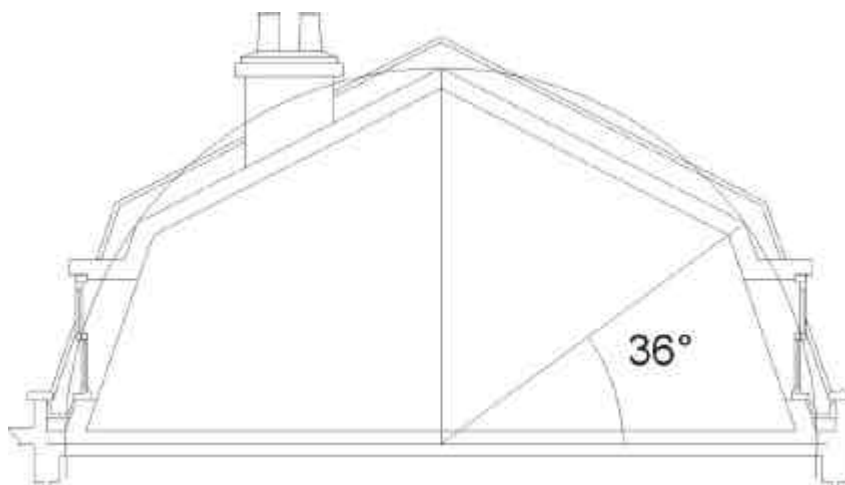
## DETAILED DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

### Major Roof Enlargement

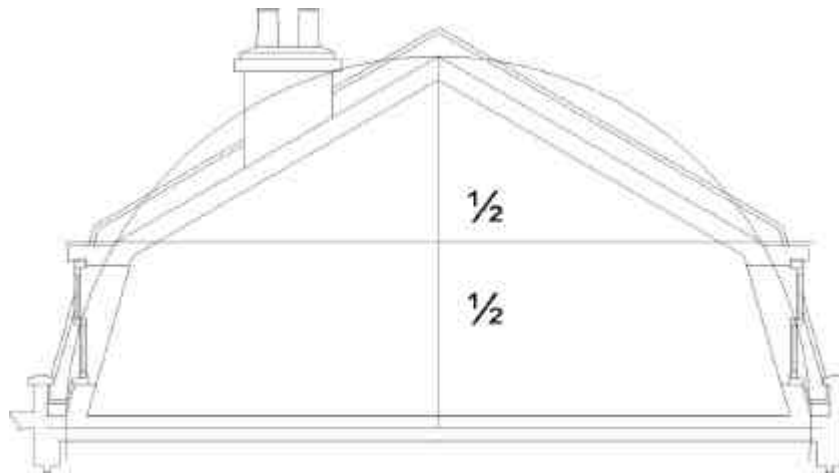
Where the roof space is too small and the ridge too low to create usable space within it, requests are often received to enlarge the roof area by raising the ridge height or reshaping the roof structure. This is a significant change which will be resisted where the existing roof form is an important element of the building's character, contributes to the local street scene or where the extension would harm the amenities of adjacent properties. It would be very unlikely to be acceptable on a Listed Building. In situations where such extensions are acceptable on unlisted buildings, the design should complement the building, for example with a traditional steeper pitched roof, or mansard or gambrelled roof. This amounts to adding an additional storey, and it may be preferable instead to extend the building to the rear in a complementary style.

Traditional 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century mansard roofs are normally subdued and subsidiary elements of the building. When building new mansards, care must be taken to ensure that the roofs are well balanced, are not over-dominant and are set behind a parapet and concealed gutter. The lower steeper slope should be about 72° - 75° from the horizontal and the upper gentler slope normally should be about 27° - 30° from the horizontal and therefore visible from the ground. (See diagram). Flat topped roofs or those with very shallow upper slopes mimicking mansards are not acceptable. The windows should be set in projecting dormers (see below).

### Two alternative methods of setting out a traditional mansard roof



Example 1



**Example 2**

Some styles of buildings draw more from the vernacular tradition and have gambrelled roofs, often with eaves details. Gambrelled roofs have steeper pitches and higher ridges. They have dormer windows and in Sussex are often clad in handmade plain clay tiles.

- New mansard, gambrel or ridged roof extensions should as a rule be clad in the same material as the original roof structure.
- The party wall upstands between buildings and chimneys should be retained, and where necessary, extended.
- The new roof should rise from the back edge of the parapets.
- Cluttering the roofline and front slope with metal or plastic flues etc should be avoided. Any flues that are required should be positioned on a rear slope or in an obsolete chimney stack.
- Wherever possible, inline tile or slates vents should be used.



**A gambrelled roof with gabled dormers**

Many modern buildings have flat roofs. On these, pitched roofs are likely to look out of place. It is just as important to respect the character and design of a good modern building as that of a traditional building.

## **Loft Conversions and Dormers**

Traditional dormers come in differing designs, depending on the style and period of the building. There are dormers with gabled or hipped pitched roofs, or with domed or flat sheet metal clad roofs. Some have decorative barge boards or pediments. They are generally a small but important element of the building's design. Where a new dormer is acceptable in principal it is important to ensure that its design and detailing is appropriate to the character of the building.



**An unacceptable bulky dormer**

Often modern loft roof extensions are oversized and relate poorly to the design of the existing building. Schemes that rely on extensions of this type to gain the major part of their usable space are generally unacceptable and will be resisted. Not all roofs are suitable or capable of being extended.



**1930s house with larger dormers**

Dormer windows were traditionally used primarily to provide light and ventilation to an existing loft area and were of modest size. On 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings, such as 1930s English neo-vernacular houses, dormers tended to be larger with an horizontal emphasis, whilst still conforming to the proportions and symmetry of the house.

**For buildings where new dormers are acceptable, the design guidelines below should be followed:**

- Extensions to existing roofs should normally be of a dormer construction. Where over the years different styles and sizes of dormers have emerged in a terrace or group of identical detached buildings, the Council will seek to establish a consistent style based on historical precedent. The proportions, style, design and materials of new dormers should complement the existing building.

- Dormers should be carefully positioned with regard to the arrangement of windows below and the shape of the roof. Normally, a single dormer should be positioned on the centre line of the building, and, on larger buildings, multiple dormers should either align with the windows below or on the centre lines of the spaces between the windows. The symmetry of the building must be retained. Dormers should not encroach on party wall upstands.
- Roof extensions that alter the basic shape of the roof, for example, from a hip to a gable end on a semi-detached house will be unacceptable. This leads to an imbalance between the semi-detached pair and creates a visually heavy roof to one half.
- No part of a proposed roof extension or dormer should come up to or rise above the main roof ridge level or wrap around a hip ridge. Instead it should be well contained within the existing roof profile.
- The dormer should be kept as small as possible. Generally its overall width should be no wider than the windows below. There should be no large areas of cladding either side of the window or below it. Its window cill should sit just above the roof slope. The thickness of the dormer cheeks should normally appear to be little wider than and almost entirely concealed by the face of the window frame. The exception is that with some 1930s neo vernacular houses, the corners may be dressed with corner tiles.
- The dormer should normally be set back from the eaves line. There are some rare exceptions to this rule in the case of some styles of late Victorian buildings where the dormers have tall windows and sit on the outer wall.
- The dormer should have a roof form and detail appropriate to the character of the building. Oversized structural timbers and an unnecessarily deep or projecting fascia is a common error in detailing and particularly disfiguring when applied to new dormers on historic buildings.
- The windows should match the materials, and proportions of those of the existing building. Smaller dormers with simple symmetrical side hung casements, or horizontal sliding sashes are not uncommon or out of place on buildings with vertical sliding sashes. UPVC or aluminium windows are not acceptable on Listed Buildings, on buildings of Local Interest or on traditional buildings in Conservation Areas or other areas of townscape merit or in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- In Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings flat roofed dormers should be roofed in lead or possibly zinc or copper, but not in felt.



**A poorly proportioned and positioned dormer and rooflight**



**A well proportioned and positioned dormer and rooflight**

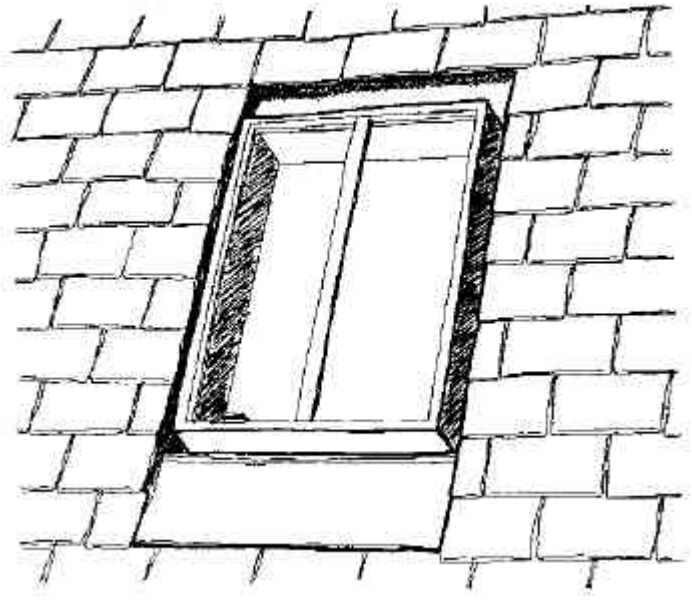
- Care must be taken with any flues or downpipes required or to be extended, to ensure that they do not protrude unduly or 'snake' across the rooftop. Where they have to be diverted, this should be done within the roof space.
- Where original dormers have been enlarged or altered over the years, owners will be encouraged to reinstate the original design. In Conservation Areas grants may be available for such schemes.

## **Plant Rooms, Lift OVERRUNS and Staircase Bulkheads**

- Plant, air conditioning systems, water tanks and lift motors or overruns should be incorporated within the roof space and not obtrude above it.
- Staircase accesses should be carefully considered to avoid unsightly box shaped roof extensions.

## **Roof Lights**

Where a large sized window is required to provide natural daylight and ventilation to a room in a roof, a dormer should normally be used rather than roof lights. It is aesthetically superior and has the additional advantage of increasing the area of headroom available. An exception may be made however in respect of buildings where it is important that the roof profile should be retained without protuberances, or where dormers would be out of character with the building, such as on most barns and industrial buildings. In these situations, they should be confined to the least visible roof slopes, such as at the rear or the inside slopes of valley roofs.



**A traditional flush roof light**

Where roof lights are acceptable in Conservation Areas, in other areas of townscape merit, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, on Listed Buildings and on Buildings of Local Interest, they must:-

- lie flush with the roof covering,
- be of traditional proportions, design and construction and
- should normally have slim steel or cast iron frames. Aluminium and plastic frames are generally too bulky.