

# THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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## Residential Amenity Standards SPD

The Trust supports the design standards in the SPD with some minor matters noted below.

However, we consider that the division into part 2 *Householder development* and Part 3 *New Development* is unhelpful because so many of the design elements are common to both. For example, the *45 Degree Code* (paragraphs 2.6 to 2.9) and *Garages and Outbuildings* (paragraphs 2.27 to 2.31) clearly should also apply to newly built property, and *Minimum Separation / Privacy Distances* (paragraphs 3.2 to 3.7) are equally applicable to householder extensions if they push the building too close to neighbouring property. These are the most obvious examples of something that is true across many of the design elements.

The SPD would be better arranged with the main body being core elements applicable to all development, with separate sections having advice that is only relevant to householder planning applications or to new residential development. We have suggested below which sections should go where.

The aim of this SPD should be that the end result of development should meet the same standards, no matter if the starting point was an existing building or a cleared site. Newly built properties should not exhibit features that a householder would not be permitted to include as an extension, and *vice versa*.

The comments below follow the numbering of the proposed SPD (which is the proposed column in the comparison table).

1.1 and 1.2 are supported.

1.3 is supported too, though it might be improved by stating explicitly what is implicit, namely that these standards apply both to householder proposals and to new residential development.

1.4 If this bulleted list is to be retained then it should also include a reference to the minimum separation rules that provide amenity and privacy.

1.5 If this section is to be retained then it should also certainly include references to the 45 Degree Code, to garages and outbuildings and dormer windows. In addition, elements that might be viewed as extensions to an existing building (such as conservatories, sun rooms and orangeries) should be mentioned.

### Core elements

We consider that the following paragraphs are applicable to both householder planning applications and new residential development.

2.3 We support the listed design principles. The point that *Privacy is an important principle* is very welcome.

Most of these bullet points are also applicable to new residential development. This is particularly the case where the new development is on a vacant plot surrounded by existing housing.

2.4 We would rewrite this as *In summary, **developments** should not negatively affect neighbouring properties and **extensions** should complement the main house.*

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- 2.5 These guidelines also apply to new residential buildings, especially on vacant plots surrounded by existing housing.
- 2.6 to 2.9 The 45 Degree Code is supported and it belongs in the section with the core design elements.
- 2.10 The references to a conservatory, sun room or orangery should be moved to paragraph 2.11. This will allow paragraph 2.10 to be included in the section specifically for householder planning applications.
- 2.11 This paragraph, with the addition of the point about windows from paragraph 2.10, belongs in the section because new houses may include a conservatory etc.
- 2.26 We support this section on velux-style windows. However, it is equally applicable to new build.
- 2.27 to 2.31 This section on garages and outbuildings is equally applicable to new build. We note that many of the houses in the new Mount Oswald development have these features.
- 2.34 to 2.37 Design considerations for walls and fences are equally relevant to householder applications and to new development. We support these paragraphs.
- 2.38 to 2.41 Decking and, more commonly, balconies can be features of new houses as well as being added to existing ones. The reference to permitted development rights needs qualification (see below in our commentary on paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2).
- 2.42 and 2.43 The choice of materials is equally relevant to householder applications and to new development.
- 3.2 to 3.7 These minimum standards are welcome but (as the phrase in parenthesis makes clear) they also apply when householders are extending their houses. It would be desirable to position these paragraphs adjacent to those about the 45 Degree Code.

The clarification of the way minimum separation / privacy distances are to be calculated is welcome.

## **Householder Planning applications**

We consider that the following paragraphs are relevant only to householder planning applications.

- 2.1 and 2.2 are useful additions to the SPD, but they need to mention that permitted development in a conservation area is more limited, and further controls apply where an Article 4 Direction is in force, as in parts of Durham City. If that change can be made these paragraphs would be supported.

We have tried unsuccessfully to discover further details of Article 4 Directions in the County. If they are present on the Council website we recommend they be highlighted. If not, we recommend that either they be added to the website, or included as an appendix to this SPD. These measures would assist development control officers when determining applications.

- 2.10 These proposals for single storey extensions are supported. It should be noted that the '45 Degree Code' is discussed above, not below, this paragraph. In addition an extension should

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not approach a neighbouring building any closer than the minimum separation / privacy distances set out in paragraph 3.2. A reminder of this principle should be included here.

2.12 These proposals for two storey extensions are generally supported. The final bullet point does include a reference to minimum separation / privacy distances and this is welcomed. However there is no mention of the '45 Degree Code' and this should be rectified.

2.13 to 2.19 We support these proposals regarding forward and side extensions.

2.20 to 2.23 We support these proposals regarding dormer windows. However, the reference to permitted development rights needs to be qualified to be consistent with the changes proposed in our commentary on paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2.

2.24 and 2.25 We support these proposals on Hip to Gable Extensions.

2.32 and 2.33 We support this section on driveways. New developments will have to have regard to the Parking and Accessibility SPD.

## **New residential development**

We consider that the following paragraphs are only applicable to new residential development.

3.1 We consider that this paragraph should be enhanced by also requiring that new houses should not look out of place within the street, and should enhance, and not detract, from the character of the area. This is particularly true where the development is on a vacant plot in an established street, but will also apply on a new estate, where the houses should be in harmony with each other.

3.8 to 3.11 This section on gardens and 'leftover' spaces is supported.