Isle of Man Government
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Residential Design Guidance

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE AND STATUS OF THIS DOCUMENT

1.1.1 The aim of this guidance is to help all of those involved in the design process (developers, homeowners, architects and agents and planners) to work together to improve the quality of our built environment. It is hoped that this document will encourage creative, innovative and locally distinctive designs that respond to the changing needs of our communities. The document is not intended to stifle creativity or to promote planning by numbers and off the peg designs, but rather to create a supportive context for good quality designs, be they traditional or modern.

1.1.2 The "Reform of the Planning System – Programme for Government 2016 – 2021" GD2018/0031 which was laid before Tynwald on 15th May 2018 states that "over the next 8 months, we will undertake a range of procedural changes which will introduce… New and improved design guidance and new minimum standards for most new developments", and this is intended to ensure "Our properties contribute to making our Island an even better place to live and work".

1.1.3 This guidance document fulfils that commitment and sets out how the Department will interpret and apply the Development Plan policies in relation to residential design. It is issued by the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture with the agreement of the Minister. It is intended to apply to any residential development within existing villages and towns, including individual houses, conversions and householder extensions. It is envisaged that separate guidance will be provided for dwellings in the countryside, although some of the broad principles set out within this document may still be relevant to such proposals.

1.1.4 The document is not a Planning Policy Statement (as per Section 3 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1999) but is capable of being an 'other material consideration' (as per Section 10(4)(d) of the Act). Furthermore, where proposals adopt the approaches set out within this document, they are more likely to be considered to comply with the detailed Development Plan policies that relate to design.

1.2 HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

1.2.1 When considering any proposals for any new residential development (either a new dwelling or an extension), the following issues are normally relevant:[1]

- Potential visual impact upon the street scene;
- For extensions – the potential visual impact upon the existing property;
- Potential impacts upon neighbouring properties i.e. loss of day light and overshadowing, overbearing impact upon outlook and/or overlooking resulting in a loss of privacy;
- Potential impacts upon highway safety i.e. loss of off-street parking due to proposed works / visibility splays and adequate parking provision; and
- Any site-specific issues/opportunities/constraints (e.g. the presence of trees).

1.2.2 This document provides general advice but cannot cover every eventuality. Wherever possible, it sets out generally acceptable approaches. If a proposal does not meet these, the planning application should explain why. All planning applications will be judged on their merits, taking account of the likely effect on neighbouring properties and the character of the building or street. In particular, it should be noted that this guidance does not provide specific detail in relation to heritage issues (e.g. in relation to Registered Buildings or sites within or adjoining Conservation Areas) or rural housing, as separate guidance is available in relation to these matters.

[1] *These issues are reflected in various policies of the Isle of Man Strategic Plan (2016) including General Policy 2*

1.2.3 The way in which the other issues are considered may be different where a proposal relates to the development of a new dwelling(s) compared to a householder extension. Therefore, the approach to the design of new houses (whether single dwellings, larger schemes or new estates) should take account of the issues set out in Chapter 2 whilst targeted guidance on different types of extensions is provided in Chapters 3 and 4. There are some common concepts which may apply to all types of development, and these are set out in 5 (architectural details), 6 (the wider site) and 7 (impact on neighbouring properties). The impacts on neighbouring properties relates to both the impact of the development on existing nearby properties and, where a development would result in more than one property, the impact of the proposed dwellings on each other.

1.3 PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT

1.3.1 The Permitted Development Order allows certain householder development to take place without the need for a planning application to be made and approved. The Department has created the 'Interactive House' (http://www.myhouse.im/) and any person considering extending/altering their property is encouraged to utilise this tool, to determine whether or not a planning application or building regulation consent application/s is required. Further advice on the planning process can be obtained from https://www.gov.im/categories/planning-and-building-control/

1.4 BUILDING CONTROL

1.4.1 Potential applicants should also note that most developments, regardless of whether or not they require planning permission, will require approval under the Building Regulations. Planning Permission and Building Regulation are two very separate requirements. Obtaining planning permission does NOT mean that Building Regulations Approval has also been obtained – and vice versa. Applicants are advised to contact the relevant Building Control Authority as early as possible to discuss their proposals (see details at the back of this guide).

2.0 NEW HOUSING

2.1 DESIGN STATEMENTS

2.1.1 The Strategic Plan (2016) contains the following policy.

Strategic Policy 5: New development, including individual buildings, should be designed so as to make a positive contribution to the environment of the Island. In appropriate cases the Department will require planning applications to be supported by a Design Statement which will be required to take account of the Strategic Aim and Policies.

2.2 LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS

2.2.1 The Strategic Plan (2016) states at paragraph 4.3.8,
"The design of new development can make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Island. Recent development has often been criticised for its similarity to developments across the Island and elsewhere – "anywhere" architecture. At the same time some criticise current practice to retain traditional or vernacular designs. As is often the case the truth lies somewhere between the two extremes. All too often proposals for new developments have not taken into account a proper analysis of their context in terms of siting, layout, scale, materials and other factors. At the same time a slavish following of past design idioms, evolved for earlier lifestyles can produce buildings which do not reflect twenty first century lifestyles including accessibility and energy conservation. While there is often a consensus about what constitutes good and poor design, it is notoriously difficult to define or prescribe".

2.2.2 This document is intended to facilitate good quality design, and an important aspect of that is local distinctiveness. New residential development should be informed by the best qualities of our existing residential areas. However, this does not mean that all new residential developments should seek to replicate the appearance of older ones, and good quality contemporary design is encouraged. Nevertheless, it is important that the design of new residential developments, including their scale (including height), form, layout/orientation, and detailed design (including the materials used) is informed by and respects both the nature of the development site and the character of the neighbouring buildings and surrounding area.

2.2.3 The character and context of any residential development is created by the locally distinctive patterns and form of development, landscape, culture and biodiversity. These elements have often built up over a considerable time and tell a story of the site's history and evolution - the creation of a 'sense of place'. The character and context of a site should influence design positively so that development does not simply replace what was there but reflects and responds to it, for example by allowing the long-term retention of existing mature landscaping features or water features. The initial site context should also identify established building heights, lines and orientation of buildings that are adjacent to the site and should have a positive relationship with established housing and other development, including ease of pedestrian and vehicular movement.

2.2.4 If the context to a development has been compromised by earlier development, this should not be seen as a reason to perpetuate what has been done before. Opportunities should be sought to deliver high quality sustainable development that reflects up-to-date technologies and aesthetics and creates a strong "sense of place".

2.3 DWELLING TYPES, TENURES AND USES

2.3.1 A housing development should avoid having the same type, height and density throughout, including avoiding continuous, bland and un-interesting roofscapes. It is important to provide an appropriate range of dwelling types and tenure. In larger developments a mixture of tenures and property types will encourage the development of a diverse community with living opportunities for all members of society, and affordable dwellings should be "pepper-potted" throughout the site rather than all located in one area.

2.3.2 In larger housing developments facilities such as community centres and shops or other services should be provided to reduce the need for car use and increase sustainability.

2.4 TRANSPORT ISSUES

2.4.1 It is important that development considers the needs of travelling by different means. The Department of Infrastructure has produced an Active Travel Strategy to promote walking and cycling as alternatives to motorised vehicles, as this can reduce environmental impacts and facilitate healthier lifestyles. It is also important to consider the potential to maximise opportunities to use public transport rather than private cars. Nevertheless, realistic provision for car parking is also a consideration. To achieve the above it is important to think about how pedestrians, cyclists and drivers will move within and through a site, how it connects with existing transport networks (including footpaths, cycle routes and nearby or proposed bus stops) and what provision is made for the parking of cars and the storage of bicycles.

2.4.2 Consideration should be given to imaginative ways to provide adequate levels of car parking without it dominating the streetscape. The use of the most appropriate type of parking (within the curtilage, shared parking areas and/or on-street) and both hard and soft landscaping can help to ensure that the visual impact of car parking is minimised. Traffic management and subtle changes in street materials can also be used to complement the use of layout and buildings to reduce vehicle speeds without the need for traffic-calming devices such as speed humps and chicanes.

2.4.3 The Department of Infrastructure has developed a Manual for Manx Roads, and this should be referred to in relation to highways issues. Further information is available at: https://www.gov.im/about-the-government/departments/infrastructure/highway-services/

2.5 PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SPACE

2.5.1 It is important to clearly demarcate public and private space. High quality, consistent boundary treatments should be provided both within and on the edge of development. However, other approaches may be acceptable on rear and side boundaries (i.e. timber panel fences).

2.5.2 'Left over' space that serves no useful function as part of the public realm should be avoided, and often such space provides the opportunity to incorporate street trees and private realm landscape can be used to green the development. New landscaping should be of a size and scale which can make an immediate impact in the short term, not just in the longer term.

2.5.3 It is important to ensure sufficient space within building(s) and plots for bin storage which has convenient access to the point from which it will be collected (normally the kerbside). Provision should be made for new technological services, for example broadband conduits, electric car power points and telecommunication masts.

2.6 PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

2.6.1 The Isle of Man Strategic Plan (2016) Recreation Policy 3 requires all new development (where appropriate) to include landscaped amenity areas. Proposals for 10 or more units should provide recreational and amenity space in accordance with the standards specified in Appendix 6 to the Plan (in relation to formal space, children's space and amenity space). Planning Applications for 10 or more residential units should therefore include information on how the requirement for each of these 3 categories has been calculated, and how sufficient space is included within the proposal (specifying which parts of the site are intended for which use).

2.6.2 It is important green space and play space is fit-for-purpose and in an appropriate location – conveniently and safely accessible to all the residents it is intended to serve. Applications should demonstrate that each area of openspace is:

- located so as to be accessible to the development it serves (having regard to distances and also potential obstacles such as busy roads) – noting the relevant walking distance guideline for whichever type of open space is being considered;
- designed to be of appropriate quality – noting the relevant quality guideline for whichever type of open space is being considered; and
- is of sufficient size (including allowing for an activity zone and, where relevant, buffer distance) for the intended type of open space.

2.6.3 In considering the above, it is expected that the standards within "Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play – Beyond the Six Acre Standard – England" will be applied (further information is available at: http://www.fieldsintrust.org/guidance). It is important that the application makes it clear when and how the open space will be provided, equipped (where relevant) and maintained (including which organisation(s) is/are responsible for what elements).

2.7 EFFICIENT USE OF LAND

2.7.1 The Strategic Plan (2016) contains the following policy.

Strategic Policy 1: Development should make the best use of resources by: (a) optimising the use of previously developed land, redundant buildings, unused and under-used land and buildings, and reusing scarce indigenous building materials; (b) ensuring efficient use of sites, taking into account the needs for access, landscaping, open space(1) and amenity standards; and (c) being located so as to utilise existing and planned infrastructure, facilities and services.

2.7.2 Land is a finite resource and it is important to strike a balance between the need to make best use of land (i.e. by maximising densities, so that as many dwellings as possible can be provided on the least amount of land thus reducing the need to develop new areas) and the need to make sure that new developments are attractive and fit-for-purpose. The Site Assessment Framework for the Area Plan for the East contained broad assumptions about typical densities for different locations and types of developments, and these can provide a helpful starting point. However, these should not be taken as targets. In reality, the development that takes place may be of a higher or lower density and, as determined by the context of the site and/or the location.

Density Level	Dwellings per hectare	Location and development type examples
Very High	100 - 450	Promenade or very centre of town development. Typically apartments.
High	40 - 100	Town centre development. Typically development which is apartments or terraced housing. Also could be development on smaller sites.
Medium	15 - 30	Larger sites close to the settlement centre, typically estates incorporating different dwelling types including some apartments and terraced housing.
Low	5 - 10	Larger sites towards the edge of settlements, consisting of mainly houses and bungalows with relatively few apartments or terraces.
Very Low	2	Houses set in parkland surrounded by substantial grounds.

Figure 1: Indicative Densities

2.7.3 This guidance document does not provide detail on acceptable house standards, although it is important that new development provides acceptable amenity standards as per the Strategic Plan (2016) General 2 (part h). It is anticipated that further work will be undertaken into potential size standards in relation to what acceptable standards may be and the best mechanism to implement these. This guidance will be updated as necessary. In the meantime, it should be noted that:

- the Department of Infrastructure has published detailed standards in relation to affordable housing https://www.gov.im/media/1350123/20150908-housing-standards-final-version-jan2016-lr2.pdf
- DEFA Environmental Health Housing (Standards) Regulations 2017 relates to various internal standards (including bedroom sizes) for houses in multiple occupation and flats http://www.tynwald.org.im/links/tls/SD/2017/2017-SD-0122.pdf
- Building Control Regulations do not control room size per se. However, Document 'M' sets out levels of accessibility for wheelchair uses.

2.7.4 It is important to facilitate development which allows the reuse of previously developed land and/or the reuse of buildings. It is acknowledged that sometimes a pragmatic approach may need to be taken in applying policies and standards, to enable this reuse to occur. Therefore, where the applicant can satisfactorily demonstrate that a pragmatic approach is necessary this may be taken into account in assessing the application.

3.0 HOUSEHOLDER EXTENSIONS

3.1 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.1.1 House extensions are one of the most common forms of development. Individually and cumulatively extensions can have a significant impact on the quality of the built environment. When altering or extending buildings in order to modernise, adapt, enlarge or extend them the overall character and form of the buildings and spaces around them are affected. Guidance is therefore required to provide advice as to what is acceptable in planning terms.

3.1.2 General Policy 2 of the Isle of Man Strategic Plan (IOMSP) indicates that generally house extensions and new houses within areas designated for development will be permitted, providing that they reflect and enhance the appearance of the existing property, adjoining properties, and their setting in terms of scale, design and materials. However, there are a substantial number of detailed issues that need to be taken into account in designing domestic extensions. This section provides general guidance on issues that are likely to apply to all forms of extensions, and then more detailed additional advice in relation to different potential types of extensions.

3.1.3 The main design elements that should be considered include:

- the relationship to the original part of the building – including materials, design and detailing (such as window materials and proportions);
- the relationship with adjoining properties, including the building line, roof line, orientation, and the slope of the site; and
- the pitch, shape and materials of the original roof, including the presence of original dormers and chimneys.

3.1.4 All extensions and alterations, particularly those incorporating modern design approaches, should be considered holistically with the original/main building and its setting in the landscape/townscape to avoid an awkward jarring of materials and forms. However, well-judged modern designs using contemporary and sustainable materials will be welcomed, as the Department does not wish to restrict creative designs where they can be integrated successfully into their context. Such approaches, where well designed, can serve to both improve the sustainability of buildings and significantly improve the appearance of buildings to the general benefit of the streetscene.

3.1.5 However, where inappropriately designed, located and finished, such approaches can be harmful to the character of a building and its surrounds, and become a local eyesore. Therefore, in some cases, modern design approaches will not be the most appropriate solution and the character and form of the building and its context may require a more traditional and reserved design approach.

3.1.6 It should also be accepted that in some instances it may not be possible to design an acceptable extension due to the sensitivity of the site, limited space, or the relationship with neighbouring dwellings.

3.2 POTENTIAL VISUAL IMPACT OF AN EXTENSION UPON THE EXISTING HOUSE

3.2.1 The first aspect which the Department considers when determining the suitability of an extension to a house is whether the design of the extension fits with the existing property. Extensions should generally appear subordinate to the existing house i.e. appear as smaller additions rather than being overbearing features dominating the existing house.

3.2.2 Extensions should generally have the same roof pitch (angle) and shape as the existing dwelling and the height (roof ridge) should be lower than that of the main building. Generally, pitch roofs are the preferred roof type compared to flat roofs which are generally inappropriate forms of development, especially if publically viewable, unless the existing property has a flat/low pitched roof design. The extension should normally incorporate any design/interesting features of the existing dwelling (with windows and doors replicating the design, proportions and materials of the original building, and being in line with the existing openings) unless a deliberate design decision has been made to adopt a different approach – as set out above.

3.3 POTENTIAL VISUAL IMPACT UPON THE STREET SCENE/LANDSCAPE

3.3.1 Extensions should generally be in keeping with the character and appearance of the street in which they are seen. Taking note of the spaces between existing dwellings and adhering to the front building line are important aspects when considering the appropriateness of an extension in the street scene. In the case of dwellings which form part of a group of properties and which have a prominent appearance within the street scene, it will be especially important to ensure any extension does not adversely affect either the overall group of dwellings or the individual dwelling.

3.4 POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON HIGHWAY SAFETY

3.4.1 Generally, most residential dwellings have access to a parking space within the curtilage of the property which can improve environmental and highway conditions of the area. If two or less parking spaces are currently available within the property, the applicant should try to ensure that the extension would not result in the loss of parking. If there are more than two existing spaces, then the applicant should try to ensure that there would still be at least two acceptably sized parking spaces (a full sized parking space is 3.25m x 6m, although in some instances these can be reduced).

3.4.2 Careful consideration should also be given to ensure any extension does not impinge upon visibility for motorists or pedestrians, this is especially important in the case of dwellings located on corner plots adjacent to a public highway.

3.4.3 The Department of Infrastructure Highway Services have approved a Manual for Manx Roads that goes into further detail on the requirements for all highway related matters (including parking issues). Any application that relates to highway/parking matters should be considered against this document also. It is an offence under the Highways Act 1986 to carry out any works within the public highway without the permission of the Department of Infrastructure and no construction work affecting the highway can commence until a Section 109A Agreement has been signed.

4.0 TYPES OF HOUSEHOLDER EXTENSION

Note: In addition to the extension-specific guidance set out in this section, the overall guidance set out in sections 2 and 4 should also be referred to as well as any of the guidance on related issues set out in subsequent sections which are relevant to a proposal.

4.1 FRONT EXTENSION

4.1.1 An extension to the front of a property can have the greatest impact upon the individual dwelling and/or the street scene. There may be limited circumstances when a front extension is appropriate, for example where the street has an irregular building line or pattern. Any extension should normally appear as if it were designed with the original building and not look out of place in the street. A porch extension is perhaps the most common form of extension to the front elevation of a dwelling. Whilst porches are relatively small in size, careful consideration still needs to be given.

4.2 SINGLE STOREY REAR EXTENSION

4.2.1 In relation to single storey extensions to the rear of the dwelling, generally the main issues relate to potential loss of light and/or overbearing impact upon the outlook of neighbouring properties. Extensions to terraced or semi-detached properties can have the potential for the greatest concern. With either type of property the depth (i.e. rear projection) of an extension and the position (near the shared boundary) are key in ensuring any such extension does not impinge on the amenities of neighbouring properties.

4.2.2 A "tunnelling effect" can be caused where windows are set back behind extensions projecting out either side. Ensuring an extension does not project too far from the rear of the house and/or setting an extension in from the boundary can help reduce problems of loss of daylight.

4.2.3 The acceptability of the length/depth of a single storey extension will depend on the positioning and size of neighbouring properties. For terraced houses and narrower semi-detached properties, single storey extensions are unlikely to be supported where they project more than 3 metres from the back of the house.

4.3 TWO STOREY REAR EXTENSION

4.3.1 These types of extensions have the potential to produce the greatest impact upon the amenities of those in neighbouring dwellings (see Chapter 7). There may be concerns if a proposal is to extend a semi-detached or terraced property along or close to the joint boundary. Extensions, which could have an adverse effect on the ground-floor living rooms or kitchens of neighbouring properties, are unlikely to be supported. However, problems may not arise if the neighbouring property already has a single-storey extension or outhouse on the boundary. In these cases, the Department is more likely to support proposals for a two-storey extension (if it keeps to all other aspects of this document). Each proposal should pay particular attention to poor outlook for and overlooking of the neighbouring property.

4.3.2 A useful guide to determine the likely impact of a rear extension upon neighbouring properties is by using the 45 degree approach. A 45 degree line is drawn from the centre point of the closest relevant window on the ground floor of the neighbouring property. Proposals are unlikely to be supported where the length of the line would not exceed 12 metres before reaching any part of the proposed development. However, it should be highlighted that this is guidance only and passing the test does not mean automatic approval, nor the reverse. Furthermore, the 45-degree approach will not always be appropriate and in certain cases there will be other factors that will carry as much, and potentially more weight, such as orientation, and changes in levels.

4.3.3 Solutions to these issues may be the reduction in the depth of the extension, or to set it further away from the boundary. However, chopping off small sections to leave uncharacteristic angles will not normally be permitted, as it is unlikely to produce a form of extension that is in keeping with the original house.

4.4 EXTENSION TO SIDE ELEVATION

4.4.1 This type of extension is a common extension throughout the Island as many properties are built with an attached garage which can physically accommodate being built above. Generally, the main issues relate to the potential visual appearance of the extension within the street scene and of the individual dwelling as well as the impact on the amenities of those in neighbouring property (see Chapter 7).

4.4.2 It is key that any side extension respects the proportion, design and form of the existing dwelling and that it appears as a subordinate to the main dwelling. A side extension should generally not project in front of the existing building or have flat roofs, a pitched roof will normally be essential to any side extension. The roof of the proposed extension should match the original in terms of pitch and shape. The ridge line should either follow or, often preferably, be lower than the original dwelling.

4.4.3 Whether the side extension is single or two storeys, the height and width of these side extensions should be proportionate to the size of the main dwelling. The width should be significantly less than the width of the main dwelling. The ridge height of single storey side extensions should normally be below the eaves level of a two-storey house to give clear definition between single-storey and two-storey elements.

4.4.4 Generally, where the property stands in a line of detached/semi-detached dwellings and the extension would fill in the gap, there is a risk that the extension will create a terraced appearance This is not always in the interests of maintaining the character of the street, individual house, and in the interests of visual amenity, should be avoided.

4.4.5 One way of maintaining a visual break would be to set back the extension behind the front of the dwelling by a metre to create a clear break. In some circumstances only the first floor would be required to be set back by 1 metre, although this will be determined on a case by case basis. However, it is still advisable that the ground floor should be set back behind the front elevation, even if only by 0.3m to create a "shadow" which avoids the unsightly joining of old with new finishes, whilst also providing a distinction, albeit modest, of the extension from the main house.

4.4.6 A second way of maintaining a visual break would be by leaving a gap of at least 1 metre between the side of the extension and the boundary of the property. However, a slight setback should still be retained, potentially at first floor level at least. Again, this design helps avoiding the "terracing effect". In any case, where space permits the Department would encourage applicants to retain a pedestrian passageway, between the side extension and common boundary. This will also enable access for maintenance purposes, filling of oil tanks, allow transportation of refuse and garden waste, without passing through Habitable Rooms and give the dwelling a setting within its own plot.

4.5 EXTENSION TO A DWELLING ON A CORNER PLOT

4.5.1 The extension of dwellings which are positioned on corner plots needs careful consideration, as these are generally apparent from the adjacent public highway (footpath/road) and can result in a dominating feature in the street scene, particularly if they come forward of the general line of the fronts of neighbouring properties. Extensions in these locations should not be visually over-dominating or disrupt the sense of openness between the properties and the street scene.

4.5.2 Generally, any extension should not project further than the building line of those properties on adjacent roads, whilst still respecting the existing dwelling.

4.6 DORMER EXTENSIONS

4.6.1 Dormer extensions are often problematic as they can adversely affect the character and appearance of both the individual property and the wider streetscene. Unless they are for non-habitable rooms such as bathrooms with obscured glazing, they can also create overlooking. They are unlikely to be supported where they are publically visible, unless they already form a positive characteristic of the property or streetscene.

4.6.2 There are various types, and applicants should consider which is most appropriate for their house. Traditional properties should avoid having flat roof dormers, as pitched roofed dormers may be more appropriate. Flat roofed dormers can appear as clumsy additions to a roof pitch if they are overly long or tall, or if they are as tall as the ridge. Therefore they are only generally appropriate on more modern properties (1960/70's bungalows) and/or properties where the area is characterised by houses with flat roofed dormers. Finishing the front and cheeks of the dormers in a tile or tile like material can reduce this impact.

4.6.3 The position within the roof plane, size and proportion are also important aspects to consider. The size of any dormer should be secondary to the size of the roof in which it will be positioned. Therefore, dormers that would be as wide as the house and run flush or close to the elevations/roof ridge of the house will not normally be supported.

4.7 ROOF TERRACES, BALCONIES, DECKING AND PATIOS

4.7.1 These can add a welcome amenity to a dwelling as long as the scale, design and materials complement the character of the property, whether it is traditional or modern.

4.7.2 In most instances, roof terraces on terraced or semi-detached properties are unlikely to be acceptable. For detached properties they can be acceptable where they are carefully designed to avoid unreasonable overlooking of neighbouring properties (including gardens). Large separation distances to neighbouring boundaries and habitable room windows will help to avoid such issues. Strategically placed solid screens/obscure glazed screens/slatted shutter screens may sometimes help where it is not otherwise possible to avoid overlooking. However, the use of such screens needs to be combined with careful design as such screening may result in a loss of light and/or be an overbearing and dominating feature to the outlook of the neighbouring properties/street scene. Balconies should not result in views into the rear windows of neighbouring properties at a distance of less than 20 metres.

4.7.3 Additional consideration should also be given to the potential visual impact upon the street scene and the individual dwelling. A projecting balcony can result in an alien and top heavy feature, particularly at first floor level or above. Thought should be given to minimising the visual impact of such an addition with regard to the size, projection and materials. Balconies should be designed to complement the proportions and character of the property and should be in line with windows on the original house.

4.7.4 Raised decking, terraces or patios that are higher than 0.3 metres require a specific planning approval. It is a requirement to ensure that neighbours' privacy is maintained by installing screening (fence, hedge etc.) that reaches the height of 1.8m above ground level. Screening will only be appropriate if it does not cause loss of light and/or be overbearing to an adjoining property. These areas should be designed sensibly in order to avoid dominance at the front boundary of a property. Large areas of decking are unlikely to be supported at the side or front of a property.

5.0 ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

5.1 CHIMNEY STACKS AND FLUES

5.1.1 Chimneystacks make an important contribution to the character and appearance of dwellings, the street scene and the skyline. They are also often particularly important features of many dwelling designs which as well as being functional provide interesting and distinctive patterns in the roofline often making a positive contribution to the particular quality and general appearance of an area. Extensions and roof alterations should avoid the loss of a chimneystack that positively contributes to the dwelling's character and appearance. The Department encourages, wherever practical, the retention of prominent chimneystacks to traditional/period properties, which add to the character and quality of the street scene, especially where the individual property is within a Conservation Area.

5.1.2 Proposals for traditionally styled new dwellings or extensions should include chimneys, either as full working chimneys or "fake stacks", which at least give the appearance of a chimney and help break up a potentially bland roofscape.

5.1.3 In recent years the Department has seen a number of planning application for flues serving wood burning stoves, and is broadly supportive of these. Consideration should be given to their placement, height, size and finish, as the main issue is likely to be the visual appearance of them and whether they would fit with the existing property and the street scene as a whole. Tall and/or prominent flues which have a detrimental impact to a property and/or street scene are unlikely to be supported. Where a flue may have an unacceptable detrimental impact, it may be possible to mitigate the impact by:

- colouring the flue to blend in with the existing colour of the wall the flue may adjoin (or a dark colour when the flue sits within a roof);
- encasing the flue so that it appears as a chimney; or
- incorporating the flue within the existing or new chimney stacks.

5.1.4 Before making any planning application, it is often helpful to discuss the required positioning and size of the flue required with the relevant Building Control Authority as Flues also require Building Control Consent (separate from planning approval). Details of flue sizing and positioning of the flue and installation of CO2 and heat alarms within the dwelling are all identified within the Building Regulations (Approved Document J – See 'Useful Contacts' at end of this report for details).

5.2 WINDOWS AND DOORS

5.2.1 The majority of traditional properties (i.e. Manx farmhouses & Victoria terraces etc.) on the Isle of Man have vertically proportioned windows. A general exception to this is more modern properties (i.e. 1960/70s) which have more horizontally proportioned windows (i.e. picture windows).

5.2.2 The proportions and style of proposed windows should be identified and included within the design process. For new dwellings, windows should be sympathetic to those in neighbouring properties. For extensions, windows should be sympathetic to, and reflect the style of openings in, the original part of the building.

5.2.3 In either case this can be achieved by:

- reflecting the same ratio between solid wall and window.
- Reflecting the existing proportions (the correct proportions can be established by completing a scale drawing of the original opening, establishing the angle of a diagonal across the window and applying this angle when designing windows of differing sizes)
- positioning windows to match the original symmetry and pattern of the existing building; and
- where existing windows are set back, new windows should also be set back to the same depth as the existing ones.

5.2.4 The introduction of large windows can maximise natural light, but need to be designed and positioned to sit comfortably with neighbouring buildings/the existing part of the building. Larger sections of glazing are more likely to be supported where they are part of a well-designed contemporary scheme

5.2.5 The front door with its surround, canopy or porch is often one of the most prominent features of a dwelling, especially for older dwellings in Conservation Areas and Registered Buildings. The size, ornateness, style and design of a door and doorway should reflect the architecture of the building in which it sits.

5.2.6 The style and material of new doors should generally match those on the existing building, particularly if the property is of a traditional character and the door is an original.

5.2.7 Where doors or windows are not the originals or are of an inappropriate style, any new doors or windows should generally match the original door style, design and size. This can generally be ascertained by neighbouring properties that may still have their original doors in place. Furthermore, applicants are encouraged to reinstall windows and/or doors that reflect the original style/design. Where the original door surround detail exists, this should be retained where possible.

5.3 FINISHING AND DETAILING

5.3.1 The design, detailing, external finishes, materials and architectural features can have a significant impact on the overall appearance of a new dwelling or an extension.

5.3.2 Consideration should be given to the relationship between the new building/extension and surrounding properties/the original part of the building, for example matching the brick/stone/render and colour/type, the mortar joints and continuing string-courses or continuation of plinths, string courses, decorative brickwork, bargeboards and fascias. For extensions, the position of joinery details should reflect those of the original building, this is especially relevant to more period/traditional dwellings. Consideration should also be given to the most appropriate pattern, texture and type of roof tiles/slates.

5.3.3 However, it is recognised that in some circumstances, a distinctive break in style/finishing/details may be appropriate and there have been good examples of the use of more contemporary high quality design and finishes to traditional buildings.

5.3.4 Planning approval is required for the alteration of the external finish of a building (i.e. rendering over a Manx stone finish or pebble dash to a render finish). Generally, the Department would seek the original finish of the building being retained. On the Isle of Man traditional buildings are normally finished in painted render or traditionally laid Manx stone finishes. In addition, any original decorative detailing should be retained, otherwise the architectural interest of a property can be significantly affected.

5.3.5 There are generally two styles of render on the Isle of Man: vernacular and polite/architectural, as set out below. Buildings with a render finish can be found painted in a variety of colours.

5.3.6 Vernacular render is generally found on lower status, smaller cottages/houses, rural buildings and much older buildings. The render is applied in an unstructured organic way that follows contours of the building material to which it is being applied.

5.3.7 Polite/architectural render is generally found on higher status buildings that have been considered and designed rather than developed organically over time. This is common on the Island from the Georgian period onwards. It is often referred to as stucco work and can contain imprinted and sculpted details and is intended to replicate carved stone.

5.3.8 The use of Manx stone is also a traditional building finish/construction found on the Island. It is more common in rural areas, although can be found on individual properties in towns/villages throughout the Island.

5.3.9 There are a number of examples of properties on the Island in the 'Arts and Craft' style. This was an international movement in the decorative and fine arts that began in Britain and flourished in Europe and North America from 1860 to the 1930's. The detail of finishes varied, but included render, roughcast render, black and white gables, red brickwork, decorative coloured glass windows and slate & red tiles to roofs etc.

5.3.10 There are examples of brick constructed houses (generally within towns), often using two or more colours (poly chromatic detailing). These houses where generally constructed in late Victorian times. However, brick finishes have also been used in more modern times within new housing developments and larger scale developments.

5.3.11 There are also more localised traditional finishes (as well as those already listed) throughout the Island, mainly dependent on the nearest quarry providing the stone at the time. For example; in the south (Castletown) Limestone, Granite (Ballamodha Straight), the west (Peel) sandstone and the north has buildings finished with river & beach stone (pebbles) & Ballacorey brick (red brick). Accordingly, depending on the existing finish of a dwelling, consideration should be given to try replicating the existing finish.

5.3.12 The Department recognises that in some instances contemporary design solutions may be appropriate, providing they are of a high standard of design quality, and are of appropriate form, scale and materials. Examples of more modern finishes include large areas of frameless glazing forming the extension, the use of timber/metal cladding and a variety of roofing finishes including sedum, copper or aluminium. Where it is not possible to source suitable materials to replicate the original approach, or where the materials that are available would be likely to result in the replication appearing as a poor intimation of the original, there is potentially scope for a more contemporary design approach (design and finish) which would result in a clear distinction between old and new.

6.0 THE WIDER SITE

6.1 BOUNDARY TREATMENTS

6.1.1 Boundary treatments, whether traditional or modern, contribute a great deal to the streetscape and character of an area. They define areas of private space and often make a positive contribution to the setting of the building. Poorly designed boundary treatments can undermine the quality of the built environment. Where new or altered boundary treatments are proposed, care should be taken to ensure that the proposed materials and detailing take a lead from the surroundings.

6.1.2 The suitability of the boundary treatment to the front of a property or facing the road should take account of the context of the area. For open plan estates it is normally better for there to be no walls or fences, with gardens being delineated through their use of low level plants. For more urban areas there may be a predominance of low garden walls with railings above. In rural areas, sod banks or hedging is more likely to be appropriate, unless there are stone walls present.

6.1.3 Unless circumstances dictate otherwise, generally no walls or fences should be higher than 1m where they face a highway. Boundary features to the side and rear boundaries can generally be higher (2m) without causing concerns. However, there are circumstances where there is a need for lower boundary heights in particular on corner plots, or if there is a public highway to the side and/or rear of the site.

6.1.4 Where dwellings are within an open plan estate or have a distinctive character, the erection of walls and fences greater than 1 metre at the front of the property is unlikely to be acceptable. The character of such estates is derived from the open, landscaped environment and physical built barriers will significantly detract from that character. For properties within a town/village where there is a repeated style of boundary treatments, for example low walls with cast iron railings above, then the style predominant in the street should normally be followed, in order to strengthen the existing unique character of the street scene. In rural areas, any new boundary treatment should be of the traditional style (i.e. Manx stone walling/Manx sod banks/post and wire fencing) typical of the immediate locality. Fencing and high walls should be avoided, especially to boundaries which are publically visible (e.g. roadside or footpath)

6.1.5 Overall, removal or substantial alteration of historic boundary treatments is unlikely to be acceptable. Boundary treatments should be designed in materials and details that respect the surrounding streetscape or area and boundary treatments should not be oppressive and should allow the building within the site to remain engaged with the wider streetscape.

6.2 TREES

6.2.1 Various developments, including that which involves extending a property, can change the relationship between the built environment and existing nearby trees. For example, a proposal may result in a building extending into an area that is shaded by a tree or that is affected by the seasonal debris created by trees (e.g. blossom in spring, honeydew in summer or leaf fall in autumn). The characteristics of existing trees and their shade patterns throughout the year need to be carefully considered. If existing trees have not reached their ultimate height/spread, consider how these factors may change as the tree(s) continue to grow.

6.2.2 The effect of existing trees on an extension/new build is an important consideration, both in terms of the finished building and also the construction process. Damaging ground compaction and disturbance, grade changes and root severance can cause damage to the below ground parts of a tree and its rooting environment. Above ground, accidental damage can occur to stems and branches through the movement of equipment and materials.

6.2.3 If the extension/new build will be close to an existing tree it is important to be aware that on shrinkable soils, the foundation design should take account of the risks of indirect damage, physical damage caused by subsidence and/or heave. Direct damage can also occur as a result of incremental root and stem growth. For more information please see the Department's guidance in relation to trees and the planning process.

6.3 DRIVEWAYS AND FRONT GARDENS

6.3.1 Front gardens provide an important physical boundary between a dwelling and the public realm. They can enhance the privacy of a dwelling, as well as filtering out the noise and air pollutants produced by pedestrians and motorised traffic. Front gardens with perimeter walls, hedges or fences can offer safer spaces in which children can play and they often contribute to the natural habitat of wildlife. Urban green space has a positive effect on health and wellbeing, by enhancing sensory and aesthetic awareness.

6.3.2 Increased car ownership and the resultant increase in demand for parking spaces has led to congested roads and has prompted many households to consider transforming their front gardens into a hardstanding to provide off-street car parking. Using good design and a little imagination it is possible to combine parking provision with an attractive and welcoming front garden. It should be noted that for properties within Conservation Areas, in particular terraces, the creation of new access/openings may unacceptably disrupt the rhythm, appearance and character of the existing street scene/Conservation Area and is unlikely to be supported. In such areas, parking to the rear may be a more acceptable option.

6.3.3 It should be acknowledged that car parking in front gardens does not necessarily increase the overall amount of car-parking capacity within an area. The creation of an off-street space normally requires the provision of a new access, which can result in the loss of at least one on-street parking space. Proposals which do not result in a net benefit are unlikely to be supported.

6.3.4 Proposals which result in the loss of more than 50% of the existing front lawned/landscaped garden will not normally be supported, to ensure the character of the street scape is retained and avoid frontages of properties appearing as one large car parking area, detrimental to the appearance of the street scene and to the outlook of residents. It is important that the design of a driveway maintains a balance between hard and soft landscaping and contributes positively to the street scene. Proposals are unlikely to be supported where they do not meet the following guidelines:

- the area intended for the driveway should be the minimum space necessary (see the Manual for Manx Roads);
- where possible, the impact of the driveway is lessened by retaining mature trees and shrubs and/or creating areas of new planting (for example, a planted strip or hedge between the vehicular and pedestrian access can help to break-up the appearance of the hardstanding whilst planting around the fringes of the driveway can also be used to good effect and may be used to help screen the vehicle);
- if an opening is made in an existing wall, fence or other boundary feature, the ends should be made good with matching or sympathetic materials (i.e. pillars);
- where possible, separate pedestrian access should be retained/provided (existing gates should normally be retained and any new gates should not open out over the highway);
- any new gates, walls, fences or other boundary features should reflect the traditional style of the local area;
- consideration should be given to a strip of grass or gravel placed in the centre of the hardstanding can hide leaked oil and maintain the look of a front garden; and
- parking spaces should be avoided directly in front of any Primary Window as the resulting outlook can be undermined by the presence of parked cars.

6.3.5 The cumulative impact of the creation of a large number of impermeable surfaces within an area can lead to a material increase in run-off during rainfall events, potentially causing localised flooding. Therefore, proposals are unlikely to be supported unless they adopt one or more of the following approaches:

- utilising an existing green or gravel area;
- guiding water away from any impermeable area towards a vegetated area, or soakaway; and/or
- constructing a driveway from block paving or other permeable surface (i.e. loose gravel and resin bound gravel (prevents gravel spilling onto highway) or matrix pavers or cellular paving or brick pavers or permeable bitmac).

6.3.6 If, following the installation of a driveway or parking area, there are disputes between neighbouring properties in relation to drainage matters this will normally be regarded as a civil matter.

6.3.7 Consideration needs to be given to the movement of people and vehicles entering and leaving the driveway/access. The following advice should be considered:

- to allow good visibility splays for cars leaving the driveway, vegetation or other features such as gates, pillars and walls should not be over 1m high within the required visibility splay (See Manual for Manx Roads to determine required visibility splay); and
- cars should not overhang the pavement, should not block the entrance to the dwelling and a clear pathway should be provided at the entrance to the dwelling.

6.3.8 It is an offence under the Highways Act 1986 to carry out any works (i.e. creation of a new access, altering an existing access and dropping a kerb etc) within the public highway without permission of the Department of Infrastructure and no construction work affecting the highway can commence until a Section 109A Agreement (separate from a planning application – without this agreement the works approved by the planning application cannot be carried out) has been signed.

7.0 IMPACT ON NEIGHBURING PROPERTIES

7.1 GOOD NEIGHBOURLINESS

7.1.1 Applicants are advised to envisage what a new dwelling or extension would be like if they lived next door. Would they like this development next door to them? Would they feel blocked in or overlooked? Would the development feel too close, dominant/overbearing or cause a loss of light to their home? By examining what it would appear like from the point of view of neighbouring properties it is possible to gain an insight into what may or may not be acceptable.

7.1.2 It should also be noted that whilst the Department does not involve itself in ownership issues between neighbours (as these are a civil matter), applicants should ensure that no part of the extension (including foundations and guttering) crosses the boundary line. The Department encourages sidewalls being set at least 0.3 metres from the boundary line. If this is not possible, applications should include a sectional drawing showing that all aspects of the extension are within the ownership of the applicant's property.

7.1.3 The Department would encourage potential applicants to consider discussing their proposals with their neighbours before an application is made. For large developments it may be appropriate to hold a public meeting. The benefits include the following:

- local residents will feel that an effort has been made to keep them informed and perhaps that their views have been taken into account; and
- they can gain a greater understanding of aspects of the development;
- it can avoid local residents becoming alarmed when they see the planning application being advertised on the Government website and yellow site notice displayed outside the application property.

7.2 MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

7.2.1 There are some common issues in relation to impact on neighbouring properties which may apply to both new dwellings and extensions to dwellings, and these are:

- potential loss of light/overshadowing;
- potential overbearing impact upon outlook; and
- potential overlooking resulting in a loss of privacy.

7.2.2 In assessing the above issues it is important to understand the functions of different rooms and the importance of the windows serving them. For the purpose of this document, the Department defines three types of rooms:

- Primary Habitable Rooms – Living Rooms, Dining Rooms, Kitchens which includes dining facilities and Conservatory;
- Secondary Habitable Rooms - Bedrooms and kitchens; and
- Non-Habitable Rooms – these include bathrooms, utility rooms, hallways/corridors, stairs/landings, garages, porches and storage.

7.2.3 Within this document the phrase 'habitable room' means both Primary and Secondary unless otherwise indicated. However, in assessing impacts in relation to light/overshadowing and overbearing impact on outlook (but not overlooking) the Department draws a distinction between:

- Primary Window – The main window serving a Primary Habitable Room. Where there is only one window, this is the Primary Window. Where there is more than one window, the Primary Window is normally the largest and the one which provides the most pleasant outlook; and
- Secondary Window – Any window serving a room that is not the Primary Window.

7.2.4 Therefore, for the issues set out in 2.1.3 (excluding overlooking) any secondary window serving a Primary Room will be considered as if it were a window serving a Secondary Room.

7.2.5 Planning Applications should include drawings should show the primary windows of primary habitable rooms on any property which has an elevation within 20 metres of the closest elevation of the proposed development.

7.2.6 The impacts on neighbouring properties relates to both the impact of the development on existing nearby properties and, where a development would result in more than one property, the impact of the proposed dwellings on each other.

7.3 LOSS OF LIGHT/OVERSHADOWING

7.3.1 A development should not result in significant levels of loss of day light or overshadowing, especially to primary habitable rooms, or to private gardens. Applicants are advised to look carefully at the path of the sun throughout the day, and consider where shadows fall, using this information to help in considering the design, position and height of the extension. The impact of overshadowing will increase if the new property/extension is to the South of a neighbouring property (as the sun's orientation is East to West). When the windows affected serve habitable rooms then it will be necessary to assess the impact upon light reaching these rooms.

7.3.2 A simple check can be undertaken in relation to this issue.

- A side view is drawn which includes the proposal site and the main face of the neighbouring property.
- A point is identified which is 2 metres above ground level on the closest wall with a relevant window of the neighbouring building.
- A line is drawn from this point at a 25 degree angle towards the application site.

If no part of the proposal is above this line, there will still be the potential for good daylight to the interior.

7.3.3 Where a change in level separates two adjoining dwellings, a proposal for a dwelling on a higher site or an extension to the higher dwelling, will normally have a far greater effect on its lower neighbour than in the reverse.

7.4 OVERBEARING IMPACT UPON OUTLOOK

7.4.1 Any development should ensure that existing residents can enjoy appropriate levels of comfort and enjoyment of their properties without their outlooks being impacted by an overbearing building/structure. The positioning, design and scale of an extension/new build dwellings should not be dominant or have an adverse impact on the primary windows of a primary habitable room or on the private garden that may be present in a neighbouring property. It is normally possible to avoid overlooking with careful design and by following the guidance set out within this document. The impact on a private garden may include consideration of the overall size of the garden and whether only a small part of it is likely to be impacted on detrimentally.

7.5 OVERLOOKING RESULTING IN A LOSS OF PRIVACY

7.5.1 The "20 metre guide" provides a useful way to identify where overlooking is likely to be a concern. It refers to the distance between elevations that contain windows serving habitable rooms that face each other - if this distance is over 20 metres, overlook is unlikely to be a concern. This distance can be relaxed where the design or orientation is such that privacy and amenity of a neighbouring property is not compromised. In dense urban areas where there is already a level of mutual overlooking a lesser standard may be acceptable. The required distance may need to be greater if there is a change in topography, which would result in an adverse effect on the privacy and amenity of a neighbouring property.

7.5.2 The presence of existing or proposed landscaping features (e.g. fences, walls and hedges) may help to mitigate overlooking at a ground floor level (depending on relative heights). Although the permanent retention of such landscaping cannot be guaranteed, it would be within the gift of both neighbours to retain/maintain/replace such landscape features.

8.0 GLOSSARY

Amenity - A pleasant or useful feature or facility. It can also relate to the quality of life enjoyed by occupants, for example the quietness of their environment.

Building Line - The line formed by the frontages of buildings along a street. The building line can be shown on a plan or section.

Building Regulations – A code to ensure the health and safety of people in and around all types of building.

Character - The local, visual distinctiveness of a townscape as defined by patterns of development and the local culture in the form of the richness of materials, landscaping and types of architectural forms.

Conservation Area - A Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

Department – References to 'the Department' refer to the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture. The Town and Country Planning Act (1999) includes various powers and responsibilities for the Department in relation to the determination of planning applications, and most of these are delivered by the Planning & Building Control Directorate.

Design Statement - A report that sets out, illustrates and justifies the process that has led to the development proposals.

Elevation - The façade of a building, or the drawing of a facade.

Form - The layout, density, scale (height and massing), appearance (materials and details) and landscape of development.

Layout - The way buildings, routes and open spaces are placed in relation to each other.

Local Distinctiveness - The particular positive features of a locality that contribute to its special character and sense of place and distinguishes one local area from another.

Registered Building – A building/structure identified on the Island as having special architectural or historical interest and being formally designated/protected under the relevant legislation.

Massing - The combined effect of height, volume and shape of a building or group of buildings.

Net Density (Sites) – This includes housing and directly associated uses and excludes major distributor roads, primary schools, open spaces serving the wider area and significant landscape buffer strips.

Public Realm - This is the space between and within buildings that are publicly accessible, including streets, squares, forecourts parks and open spaces.

Sections - Drawing showing a slice through a building or site.

Street-scene / Streetscape - The view along a street from the perspective of a driver or pedestrian, especially of the natural and man-made elements in or near the street, including the roof and building line, street trees and landscape features, pavements, bus stop shelters and other street furniture.

Storey - A floor level from ground floor upwards. A room in the roof normally constitutes a storey for example in the case of dormers. However, rooms in the roof space including the use of Velux type windows that preclude overlooking will not be regarded as a storey.

Subordinate – To be lesser than something else - smaller/less imposing

Topography - A description (or visual representation on a map) of the shape of the land, for example, contours or changes in the height of land above sea level.

Vernacular - The way, in which ordinary buildings were built in a particular place, making use of local styles, techniques and materials and responding to local economic and social conditions.

9.0 USEFUL CONTACTS

Planning and Building Control Directorate
Department of Environment, Food & Agriculture (DEFA),
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Mount Havelock,
Douglas,
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IM1 2SF

Website - www.gov.im/categories/planning-and-building-control/

Planning
Telephone - 685950
Email - planning@gov.im

Pre-application emails:
North inbox (Douglas, Onchan, Garaff, Ramsey, Lezayre, Bride, Andreas & Ballaugh) – northplanning@gov.im
South inbox (Braddan, Santon, Marown, Malew, Arbory, Rushen, Port Erin, Port St Mary, Patrick, Peel, German & Michael) – southplanning@gov.im

Building Control
Telephone – 685902 or 686446
Email - buildingcontrol@gov.im
Website – www.gov.im/categories/planning-and-building-control/building-control/
Technical guidance - www.gov.im/categories/planning-and-building-control/building-control/technical-assistance-and-requirements/

Building Control (Douglas & Onchan)

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