

Review of SG LSD3: House Extensions

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to examine SG LSD3: House Extensions in light of changes in the national policy and local context. It will consider whether it meets the requirements of Scottish Planning Policy and other national planning documents, and whether it forms a sound basis for making planning decisions on house extensions in Aberdeenshire.

2. Approach

- 2.1 The current policy states that proposals for house extensions should meet the following four criteria:
- “1) it respects the character of the surrounding area and the design and scale of the existing house; AND
 - 2) it does not significantly reduce the amenity of neighbouring residents; AND
 - 3) it would not cause the loss of, or serious damage to, trees or woodland of significant value to the character of the surrounding area; AND
 - 4) it would not prejudice either storm water or waste water management systems of the original development, or of neighbouring properties.”
- 2.2 The ‘reasoned justification’ further clarifies that houses should “remain visually dominant in overall composition after extension” and that the main issues in relation to the amenity of neighbouring properties are overshadowing and overlooking. However, unlike the previous ALP policy, no detailed guidance on the design of extensions is provided. No guidelines are provided on what may be acceptable in terms of the scale and design of extensions, providing a degree of dubiety which may be unhelpful to both development management officers and applicants.
- 2.3 The policy also fails to make explicit reference to other types of ancillary development for domestic use within the curtilage of a dwelling-house. Such developments, including garages, sheds, and boundary treatments, will tend to pose similar issues to house extensions so it would be logical for them to be considered under this policy.
- 2.4 Criteria 3 and 4 address issues which are also covered under separate SG. This provides a degree of duplication which is undesirable.

3. Background

National context

- 3.1 House extensions are not specifically dealt with at the national level through Scottish Planning Policy, the National Planning Framework or other guidance or advice. However, there is an expectation across all Scottish Government policy documents on housing and design that new developments should exhibit a high standard of design by, for example, showing an appropriate reaction to their context. From a legislative perspective, changes to permitted development rights under ‘The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2011’ have meant that many extensions are now

generally not considered by the planning system. However, this alteration to legislation does not necessitate a change in policy approach.

Strategic/regional context

- 3.2 House extensions are not addressed by the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan 2009, or the current draft of the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan.

4. Drivers of change

- 4.1 Neither the national or strategic policy context necessitate a change in policy. However, the analysis in section 2 has highlighted some deficiencies in the current policy approach:
- further clarification is required on the types of development covered by the policy, including other ancillary developments for domestic use within the curtilage of an existing dwelling-house
 - there is a need to reduce duplication within the plan
 - there is also a need for further detailed design guidance specific to such developments

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 Amendment is required to clarify that the policy covers other ancillary developments for domestic use within the curtilage of an existing dwelling-house such as garages, sheds and boundary treatments. The first line of the main supplementary guidance text should be amended to state:
- “we will approve an extension to a house, or an ancillary development for domestic use within the curtilage of an existing dwelling-house such as a garage or boundary treatment, if...”
- The reasoned justification should also be amended where appropriate to make reference to these ancillary developments.
- 5.2 Criteria 3 and 4 should be removed from this policy – both should be dealt with separately under relevant policies on these topics. It may be appropriate to introduce minor modifications to the supplementary guidance on these topics to take account of the issues raised in relation to criteria 3 and 4.
- 5.3 Consideration should be given to providing planning advice on the design of house extensions and other ancillary developments for domestic use within the curtilage of an existing dwelling-house.
- 5.4 These modifications are not of such significance that they require to be discussed within the Main Issues Report.

6. Summary of main points

- 6.1 This supplementary guidance addresses the key issues raised by house extensions – their potential impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties and that their design should reflect the scale and design of the existing dwelling-house. It is not clear that the policy applies to all ancillary developments for domestic use within the curtilage of an existing dwelling-house, and it does not provide sufficient guidance to assist applicants and development management

officers in assessing what scale and design of extensions are appropriate. It also addresses issues which are covered elsewhere in the plan – namely drainage and the protection of trees and woodland. The following minor actions are proposed:

- Removal of criteria 3 and 4 from the policy and introduction of minor amendments to the supporting text of supplementary guidance SG Safeguarding 1 (Protection and conservation of the water environment) and SG Safeguarding 3 (and conservation of the water environment) to clarify that they apply to all forms of development.
- Modification of the supplementary guidance and reasoned justification to clarify that this supplementary guidance also addresses other ancillary developments for domestic use such as garages and boundary treatments.
- Modification to the reasoned justification to make reference to the creation and publication of planning advice on domestic developments

References

Aberdeenshire Council (2012) *Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2012*

Scottish Government (2010) *Scottish Planning Policy*

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2011