7. alterations and extensions

Two storey rear extension to house at Edensor. Note date stone: 1966
Alterations

7.1 The improvement or renovation of an existing property is generally preferable, both on cost and visual grounds, to redeveloping the site afresh. It is often also the more sustainable option. An old building will have features and detailing that cannot be rebuilt today.

7.2 Alterations need to be undertaken with care. Insensitive changes can easily spoil a building. The key to a sensitive approach is to take note of what is there already before preparing the design and to work with and not against the building’s character (accurate survey drawings are essential in this respect). The aim should be to revitalise the building without altering its fundamental character.

7.3 Certain alterations may require planning permission depending on the extent and nature of the works (for advice on this see the National Park’s Planning Guidance Notes).

Improvements to Non-traditional Houses

7.7 The post-war building boom of the 1950s and 1960s resulted in houses being built in the National Park which are neither of traditional or good modern design. If alterations or extensions are being considered then this is a chance to improve their appearance and enhance the area. Even something as simple as painting a prominent fascia or barge board in a dark, neutral colour will be a considerable enhancement.
Extensions

7.8 All extensions should harmonise with the parent building. An extension should respect the dominance of the original building and be subordinate to it in terms of its size and massing. Setting back the new section from the building line and keeping the eaves and ridge lower than the parent building will help.

7.9 It may be possible to add a well designed extension in a modern style provided it is in harmony with the original building and does not diminish its quality or integrity.

7.10 The smaller the parent building, the fewer the options for extension. A two storey rear extension to a small cottage is unlikely to be acceptable, even on the rear. A single storey toll house is even more constrained and any extension would probably need to be flat roofed and concealed behind a high wall in order to retain the apparent minimal nature of the accommodation.

7.11 Irrespective of size however, all buildings can reach a threshold point beyond which further extension is just not possible without destroying their character. A large house can all too easily begin to look like a terrace of houses if it is extended too far from either gable.

7.12 The Authority’s policies accept extensions provided they do not harm the character of the building or amenity of the area. Extensions limited to less than 25% of the original building are more likely to be approved.
Porches

7.13 Porches must be appropriate to the property and well designed. They rarely look right on small cottages and often spoil terraced properties. They detract from the basic simplicity of such buildings. In these cases, an internal porch is the better solution.

Garages

7.14 These need to be designed and built in sympathy with the properties they serve. Materials and roof pitch should generally match those of the parent building. If attached to the building, the new garage should be clearly subordinate. A separate garage building is however often the better solution particularly where more than one garage is needed. Here it is best to relate the form to that of traditional outbuildings, the nearest example being the cart shed, with its openings on the building’s long axis beneath the front eaves. Another approach is to minimise the garage’s obtrusiveness even further by considering an underground solution.

Conservatories

7.15 Historically, these only occurred on larger houses from later architectural periods. They are out of keeping on small cottages or houses dating from before the mid 18th century. Garden rooms are generally an alien feature being neither visually transparent nor traditionally solid. Upvc should not be used as a material on conservatories.

7.16 For more discussion of these topics please refer to the Detailed Design Guidance Note: Alterations and Extensions.