

The Friends of Lewes

Guiding Principles for the Design of Dormer  
Windows

6<sup>th</sup> Draft  
October 2013

## **Introduction**

Dormer windows contribute greatly to the variety of roof forms and their appearance can significantly affect the architectural integrity of a building and the visual amenity of an area.

Some dormers were conceived and constructed as part of the original building design, but many have been added at a later date to allow better use of attic space. In earlier years these dormers were usually accommodated without upsetting the balance of the roof. More recently, however, the introduction of many large and inappropriate box style dormers has damaged the character and appearance of some neighbourhoods. Many planning applications now concentrate on the maximisation of internal floor space and inadequate attention is given to form. The balance and visual interest previously achieved is often absent. This loss is detrimental to the external appearance of the building itself and the streetscene in general.

The Friends of Lewes Society aims to stimulate public interest in the beauty, history and character of the town of Lewes and its surrounding area; and to promote better design in development proposals. It believes that new dormer windows or roof extensions should respect the scale of the building and they should not dominate or overwhelm the original roof. They should also preserve the character of the neighbourhood and not have an adverse impact on the appearance of the streetscene. This guidance sets out ten key principles the Society encourages property owners, developers and architects to follow in the design of new dormer windows. Appendix 1 also contains illustrations of examples of better design, which the Society seeks to promote.

The Friends of Lewes Planning Committee reviews all planning applications submitted to the South Downs National Park Planning Authority (SDNPA) for development proposed in Lewes. It forwards its comments to Lewes District Council's Planning Department to whom the decision responsibility is usually delegated (more significant applications are determined by the SDNPA). Every planning application is considered on its merits and this guidance is used as the yardstick against which each application for a new dormer window is assessed. If comments are submitted to the local planning authority they are made either in support of or objecting to aspects of the planning application.

The Guiding Principles below have been informed by pre-application advice provided by Lewes District Council (Appendix 2), The Planning Inspectorate appeal decision Ref: APP/P1425/D/10/2137199 relating to planning application Ref: LW/10/0762 and the results of a review of Supplementary Planning Guidance on dormer windows published by other local planning authorities.

## **Guiding Principles**

Listed buildings and buildings within the Conservation Area:

1. Where dormers are part of the vernacular character of the building, the design and materials must be architecturally and historically accurate and reflect the character of the building and area.
2. Dormers should have a traditional appearance, normally with a hipped or gabled roof.
3. Dormers should be kept as small as possible with particular regard to height.
4. The replacement of inappropriate dormers and roof extensions with architecturally and historically accurate dormers will be supported.

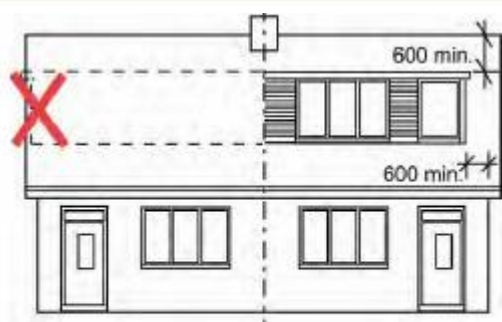
All properties (including those above):

5. New dormers should preserve the character of the neighbourhood and should not have an adverse impact on the appearance of the streetscene.
6. Dormers should sit well within the roof slope and be set away from gables, hips and down from the roof ridge in order that the roofline is retained unaltered.
7. Proposals to alter existing roof profiles from hipped end to gable in order to accommodate a new dormer should not undermine the proportions, balance or character of the building or group.
8. Dormers should be placed so as to form a definite relationship with the main features of the building's façade and should be aligned and be symmetrical with other windows and doors on the building.
9. Windows should reflect the style and proportion of existing windows and materials used for the sides of the dormer should match or be sympathetic to the original roofing material.
10. Where dormer windows that conform to these Guiding Principles exist in adjoining properties, new dormers should generally match.

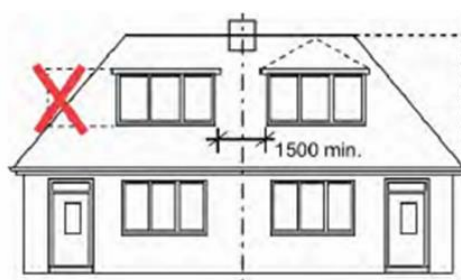
## Appendix 1

To include line drawings of dormer windows that represent better design.

Note: The drawings below are examples from other publications and are for illustration only.



Box dormer extension on small semi-detached house (in this case it is permissible to build up to the party wall) Dormer should not extend out to verge



Flat roofed dormers on more traditional hipped roof house (Dormers should not breach hips. A pitched roof on this kind of dormer greatly increases its bulk). Extending roof to the gable on one side only is best avoided.



## Appendix 2

Pre-Application Advice given on LW/11/0018 by Peter Young, Senior Planning Officer,  
Lewes District Council, 21.11.10

“Since the establishment of the National Park, this authority has taken the view that if a “box style” dormer can be seen from the public realm, then it is likely that an objection to the proposal will be raised. Where permission is required for a dormer window which would be visible from the public realm, it is generally considered that they should be centrally located within the roof, set back from the eaves, no higher than the ridge, proportionate in size and must not dominate the roofscape. I do not consider that the proposed dormer would adhere to these requirements.”