

## **Dormer Window and Rooflight Design Guidance**

### **Introduction**

The provision of living accommodation in the roof space of a dwelling usually necessitates the construction of a dormer window on the roof slope of the building. This can often result in a bulky and prominent addition which spoils the appearance of the building and has a detrimental visual impact on the street scene. This Supplementary Planning Guidance has been prepared to provide advice and guidance on how to achieve a more sympathetic style of roof alteration. It should be read in conjunction with Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

### **The Need for Permission**

Planning permission is required for a dormer window in the following instances:

- where the property lies within a Conservation Area or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- where the dormer is on a roof slope which forms the principal elevation of the property **and** fronts a highway;
- where the dormer extends above the ridge line of the property;
- where the dormer includes the addition of a veranda, balcony or raised platform;
- where the property is a flat; or
- where “Permitted Development” rights have been removed by a condition attached to a previous planning permission.

### **Planning permission is also required if:**

- the dormer would increase the cubic content of the original roof space by more than 40 cubic metres (if on a terraced house) or 50 cubic metres (if on a detached or semi-detached house);

### **Planning permission is not required for:**

- the provision of a rooflight in the roof slope on any dwelling (other than a flat); and
- the provision of a dormer on a roof slope which does not front a highway (except where the dwelling is within a Conservation Area or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and which complies with the above restrictions.

Subject to:

- The materials used must be of similar appearance to the existing dwelling;
- Dormer windows must be set back as far as practicable, at least 20cm from the eaves;
- Side-facing dormer windows must be obscure-glazed and any openings must be 1.7m above the floor.

For Listed properties, Listed Building Consent is required for the construction of any dormer or rooflight. You are always advised to check with the Planning Department at an early stage to confirm whether your proposal requires planning permission. In all cases Building Regulations approval is required.

## Function

While the introduction of a dormer window may enable roofspace to be used as a room, it should not be used to increase the space available or to gain extra headroom. Consequently, a dormer should be small in scale and not dominate the roofslope. It is important that the design adopted reflects the traditional styles and materials of dormer windows in Mid Sussex. Designs should also comply the Building Regulations and you should check carefully with the Council's Building Control section before proceeding.

## Design and Materials

Dormers should relate to the style and proportion of the windows below and be positioned so as to respect the symmetry of the existing building. They should be regularly spaced, though not necessarily immediately above the windows below. However, dormers positioned at the edge of the roof will look visually weak and produce an unbalanced elevation.



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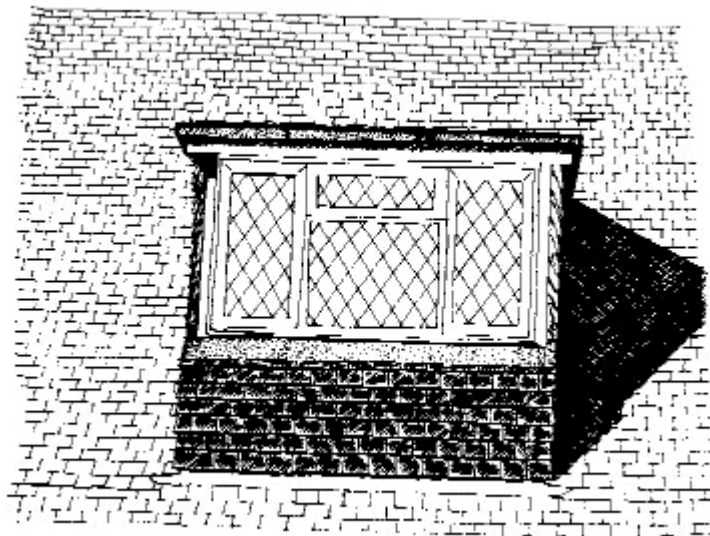
Dormer windows should be set back from the front building line and below the ridge line of the existing roof. They should be visually subordinate to the roofslope, enabling a large proportion of the original roof to remain visible. Large, box-like, flat-roof dormers will conflict in form with the roof of most houses or bungalows and are generally unacceptable, particularly on the most prominent roofslope. Excessively wide dormers also look unsatisfactory as they will often be out of proportion with the existing roof. The width of a dormer should generally not exceed 1.2m.



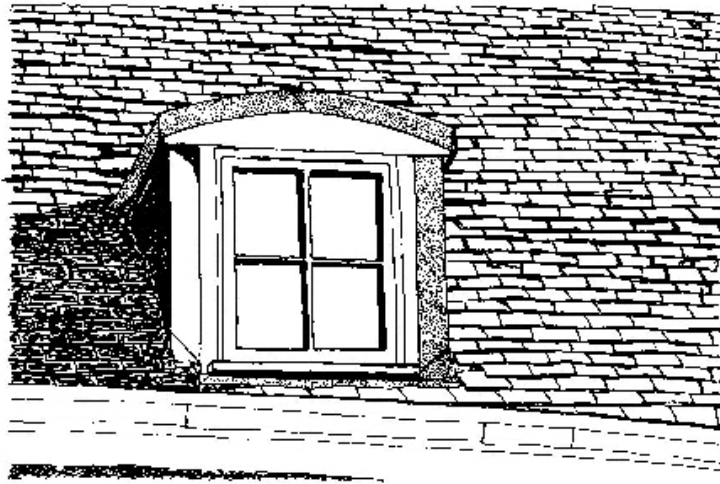
Dormers should be set back from the front of the building line and below the ridge line of the roof.



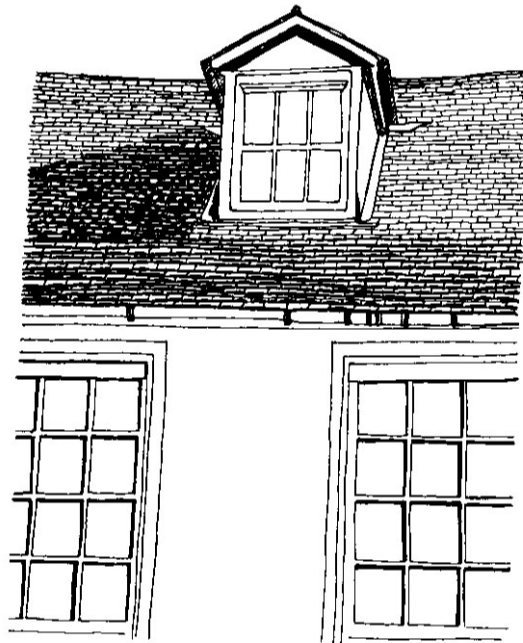
Large, box-like flat roof dormers are generally unacceptable.



The use of smaller, pitched roof dormers is recommended. In most instances, two small dormers will be more acceptable than one large dormer, as they can allow the same amount of light into a room and add a more balanced appearance to the roof. Flat lead roofs or curved roofs may be acceptable alternative designs, particularly where a dormer is to be added to a 19th century building. Pitched roofs also require less maintenance than flat roofed dormers, which should offset any initial additional cost.



Flat lead roofs or curved roofs are acceptable.



The use of smaller, pitched roof dormers is recommended.

The design of the dormer should be sympathetic to the period of the dwelling. Heavy barge boards are often used on modern housing which are out of scale with the dormer and are inappropriate to Sussex. New buildings and dormers are encouraged to be designed to take account of local distinctiveness. Suitable materials include clay tile hanging or timber weatherboarding for the dormer cheeks, while the use of small plain clay tiles is more acceptable for the roof than the larger pantiles, for example.

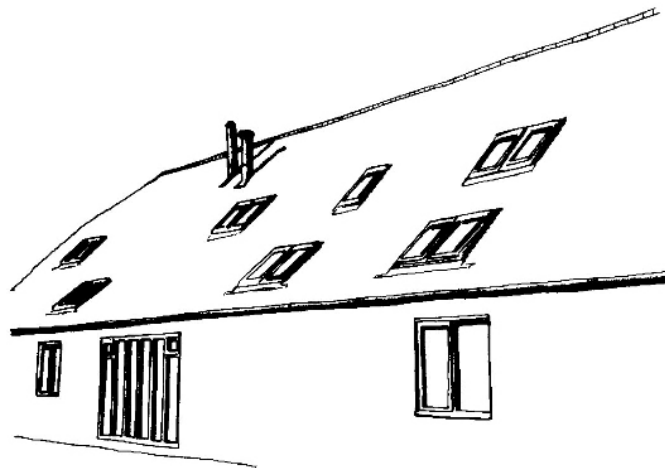


Heavy barge boards are inappropriate and out of scale.

Where proposals affect Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, these guidelines will be strictly enforced. Where dormer windows are not commonplace in the street scene they may not be permitted.

### Rooflights

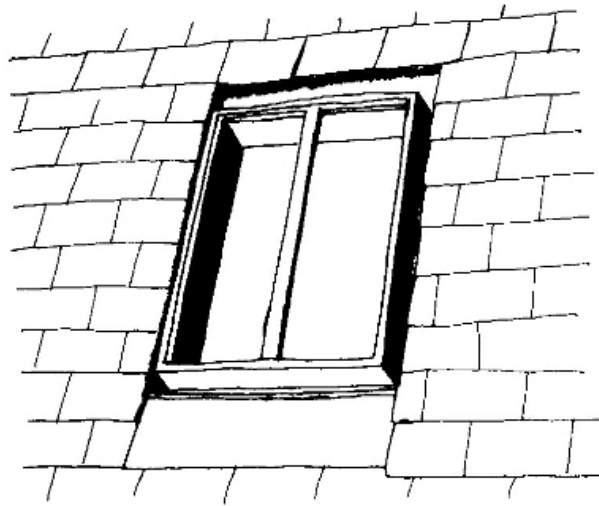
Roofslopes dominated by large rooflights can be as visually harmful as poorly designed dormers. In most cases they should be the minimum acceptable size to comply with the Building Regulations. You are advised to check with the Building Control Section in all cases. Rooflights should be used on the rear or side elevations only and be aligned to avoid a haphazard appearance.



A roofslope dominated by an excessive number of modern rooflights results in a visually harmful appearance.

For Listed Buildings and those in Conservation Areas modern timber or upvc windows will generally not be permitted and a more sympathetic metal conservation rooflight is recommended to be used instead. This style has a more traditional appearance, is smaller in size and fits the line of the roof covering. Limited exceptions may be possible only where a rooflight is completely hidden from external view on inner slopes, etc., and where it is not visible from important internal spaces. Such an alteration would still require Listed Building Consent.





The use of a more traditional, conservation rooflight which fits flush with the roof covering is recommended for Listed Buildings and those in Conservation Areas.

### **Repairs to Dormer Windows and Rooflights on Historic Buildings**

The dormer window has been a feature of European architecture since at least the mid-fifteenth century. Dormers take several different forms depending on the status of the buildings, local materials and tradition, date of construction, the use made of the roof space, and whether the dormer is part of the original design or a later addition.

The renewal of existing dormers is an operation requiring considerable care in the design and detailing to ensure an acceptable appearance. This is particularly important when the building is listed by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport as being of special architectural or historic interest.

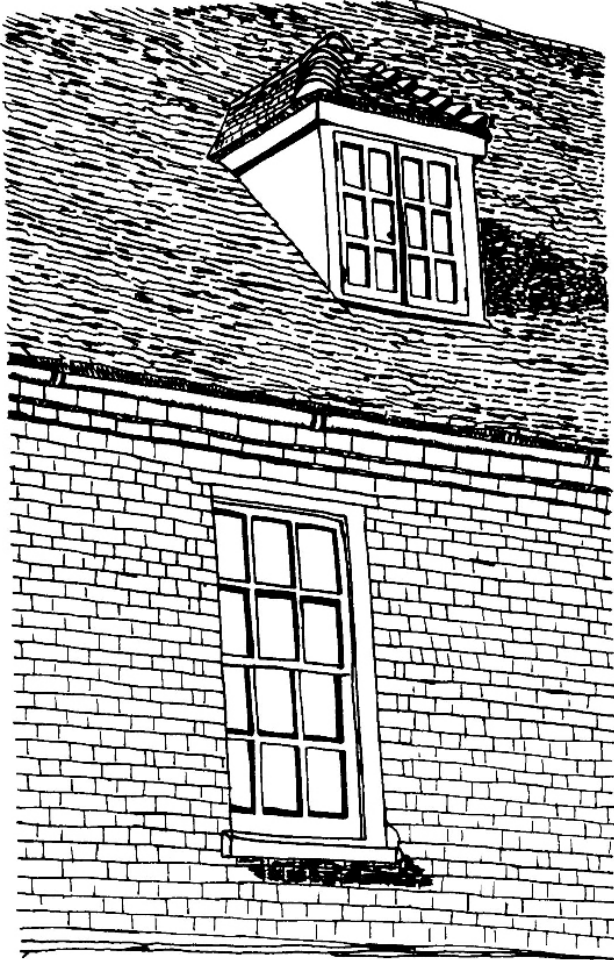
When repairing an old dormer it is important that the detailing and construction are suited to the building. The primary purpose of repair

is to restrain the process of decay without damaging the character of the building concerned and without altering those features which gives it its historic or architectural importance, or unnecessarily disturbing or destroying historic fabric. Works of repair should be kept to the minimum required to stabilise and conserve the building.

When original windows are being repaired, all existing historic details, including all historically important fittings and fitments should be treated with care. Any lost features of significance or unsympathetic alterations should be made good, provided sufficiently accurate evidence exists, either from adjacent dormers or from old photographs and drawings, e.g. the lead covering a pediment may later have been inappropriately replaced with tiles, or the glazing bars of windows may have been lost.

Rooflights also vary widely in size, design and complexity depending on the building type and scale, either when seen externally or from an important internal space such as a staircase. When repairs are carried out, materials, usually timber or iron, and details of mouldings, glazing bars etc., should be carefully matched. Although it may sometimes be necessary to improve weather tightness by modifying flashings, etc., this can be done unobtrusively. Old glass, including coloured or patterned glass sometimes found in nineteenth century rooflights, should always be carefully retained during repairs.

When working with historic buildings, the evidence of the original fabric provides the best guide for the design and detailing of works.



An appropriate small, pitched roof dormer which is visually subordinate to the roofslope