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Decoding Permitted Development

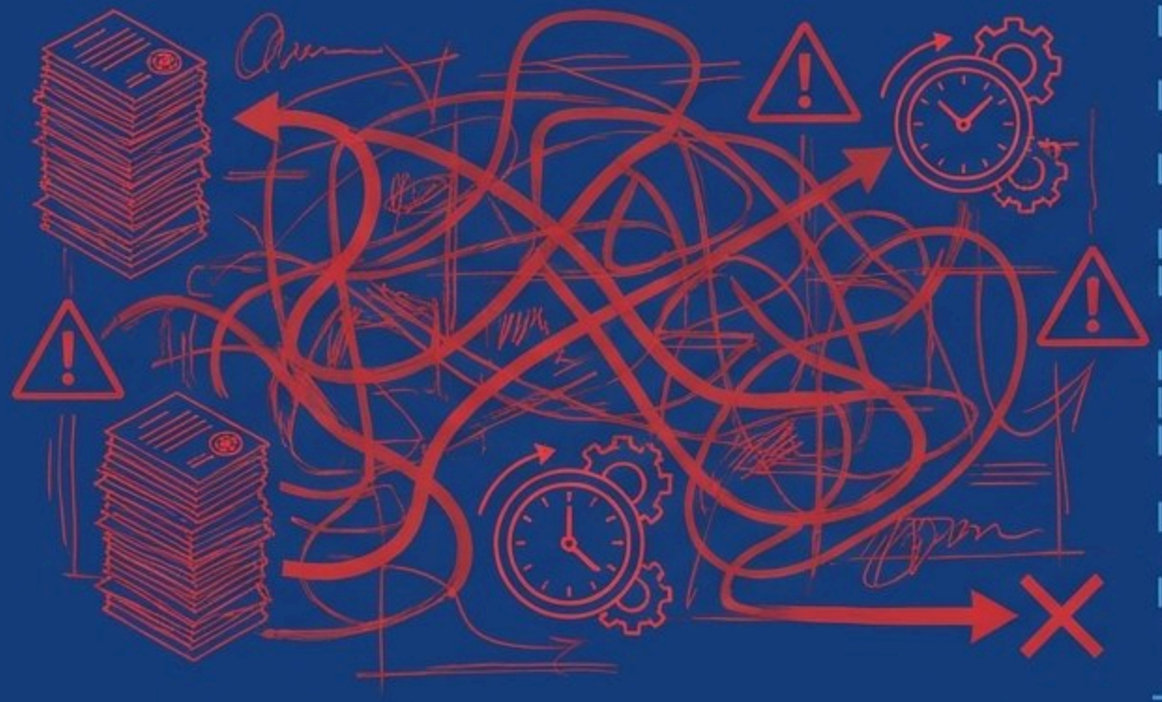
A visual guide to extending your house under UK permitted development rules

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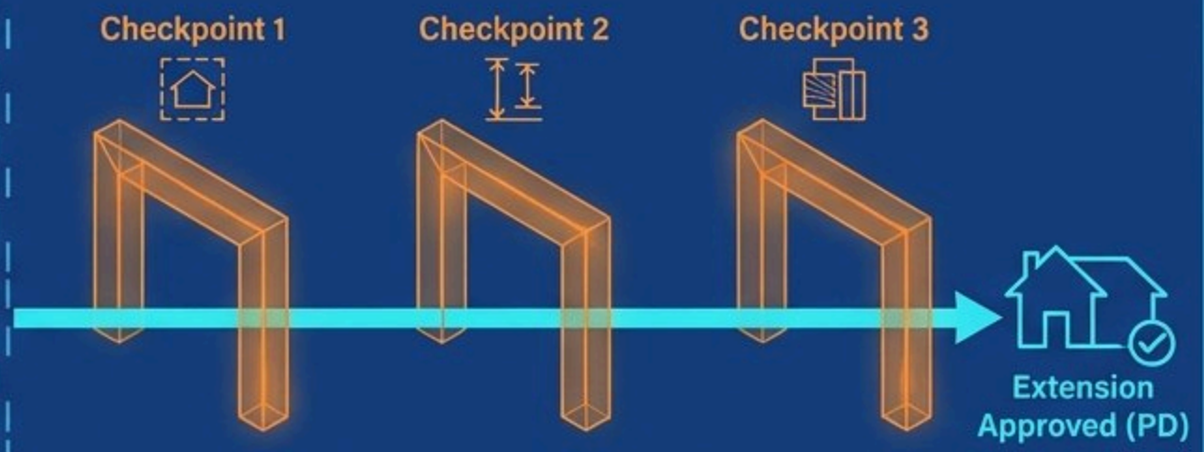
Expanding your home without the red tape

Obtaining full planning permission can be long-winded, stressful, and uncertain. However, most UK homes come with pre-approved Permitted Development (PD) rights. As long as your design stays within a strict set of spatial boundaries, you can build your single-storey extension without filing a standard planning application.

Path A: Full Planning Permission



Path B: Permitted Development



THE SPATIAL TOUR: This guide translates dense planning regulations into physical, geometric boundaries. We will move around the house—Front, Rear, and Side—to define exactly where and how far you can build.

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Check first: does your home have PD rights?

Permitted development applies to **houses**. Before measuring anything, check that your property is not one of these:

Flats & maisonettes

No householder PD rights at all. This catches many London houses converted into flats.

Listed buildings

Listed building consent is needed for most work, inside and out.

Article 4 areas

The council has removed some or all PD rights in chosen streets. Check your council's Article 4 map.

Conservation areas

PD rights remain but are reduced: no side, two-storey or 6m/8m extensions.

Newer estates

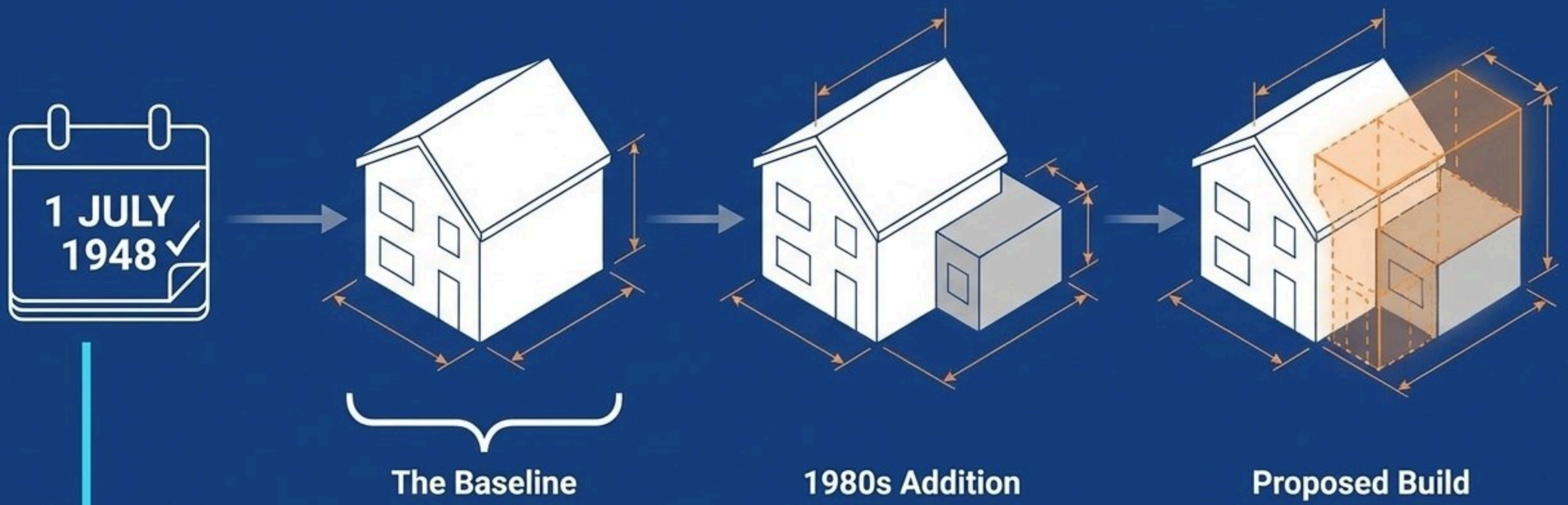
The original planning permission may have removed PD rights by condition.

Ordinary house?

Then the rules on the following pages apply. Read on.

Every calculation starts from the Original House

Before calculating how far you can extend, you must define the baseline. Permitted Development allowances apply to the Original House as it was first built, or exactly as it stood on **1 July 1948** for older properties.

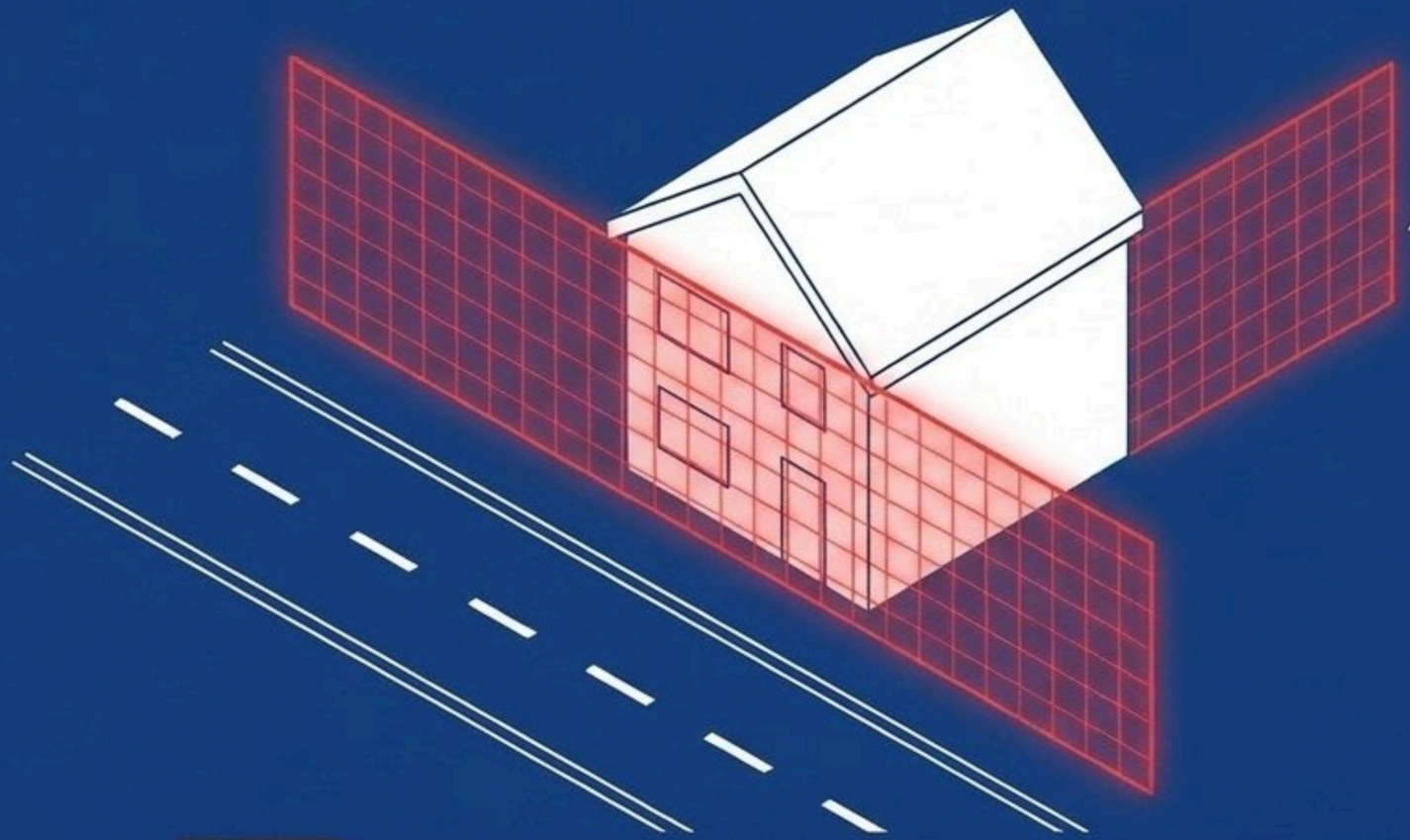


KEY INSIGHT: Your home has a finite amount of PD rights. Previous extensions—even those built decades ago by former owners or built with full planning permission—eat into your total permitted allowance.

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The absolute barrier of the Principal Elevation

The planning rules dictate that the plot area facing the road is the Principal Elevation.
Under standard PD rights, absolutely no extensions are allowed forward of this invisible line.



The Principal Elevation

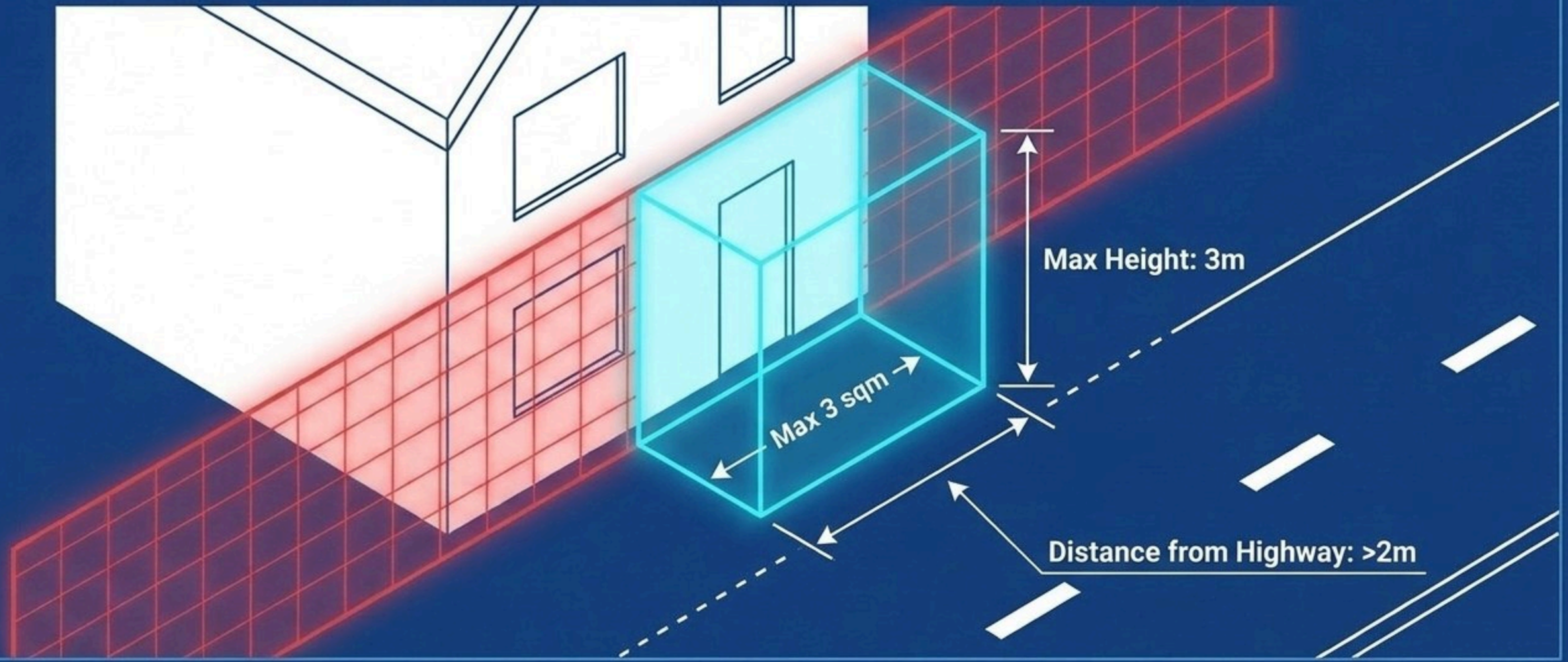
Corner Plot Warning:
If your house sits on a corner, it generally has two principal elevations, locking down two sides of the property from standard expansion.

KEY INSIGHT: The Principal Elevation is a strict boundary. No part of a Permitted Development extension can extend beyond the front wall of the original house.

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The only exception to the front is a 3-square-metre porch

The front of your house is strictly protected, but planning rules grant one specific allowance for functional entryways.

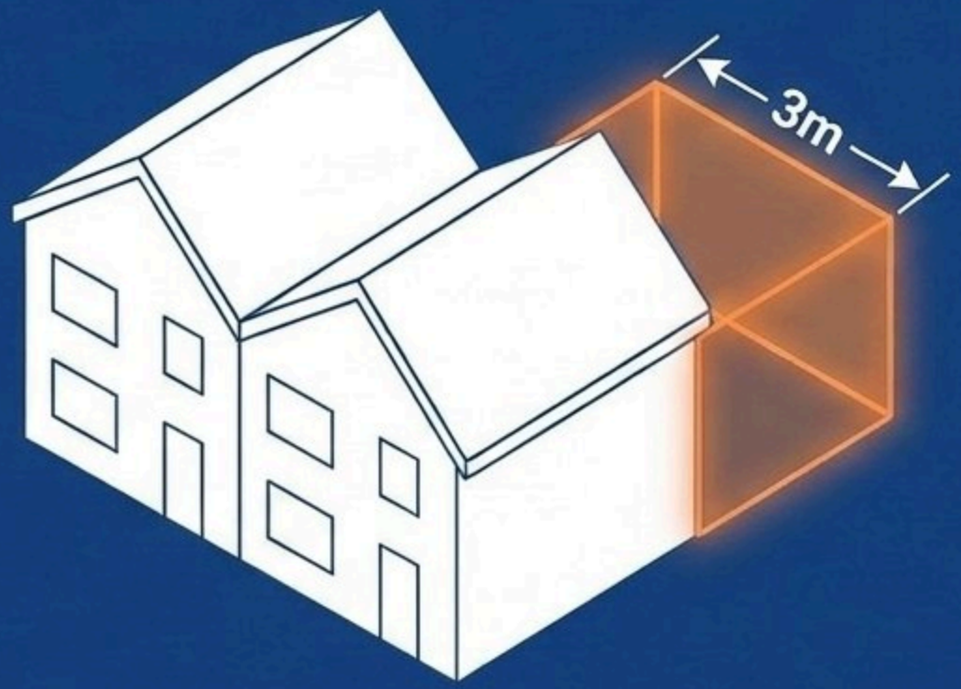


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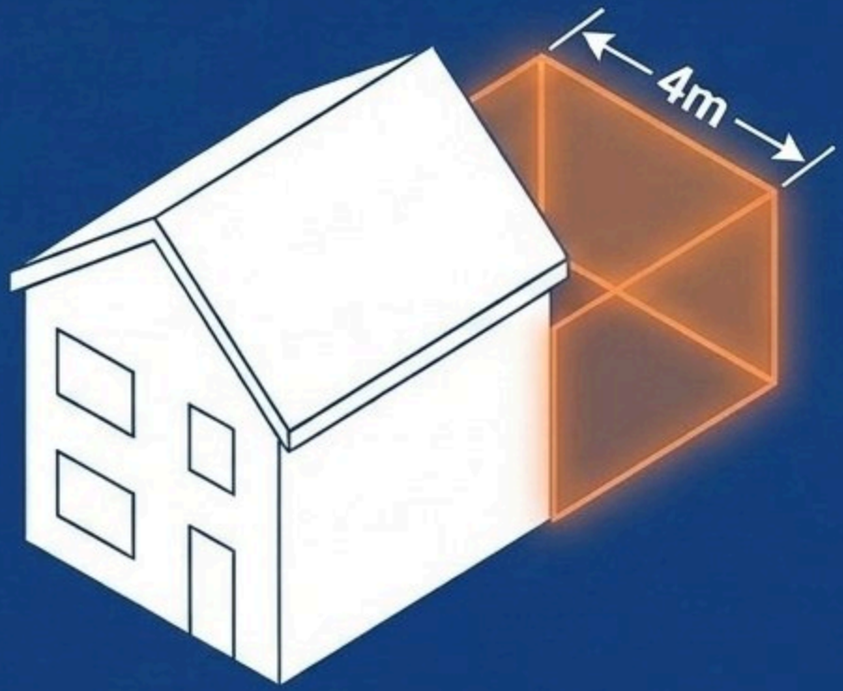
The standard rear bounding box is defined by your property type

Moving to the back garden, the rules open up. You can build a standard rear extension as long as it does not project beyond the original side walls of the house.

Terraced / Semi-Detached



Detached

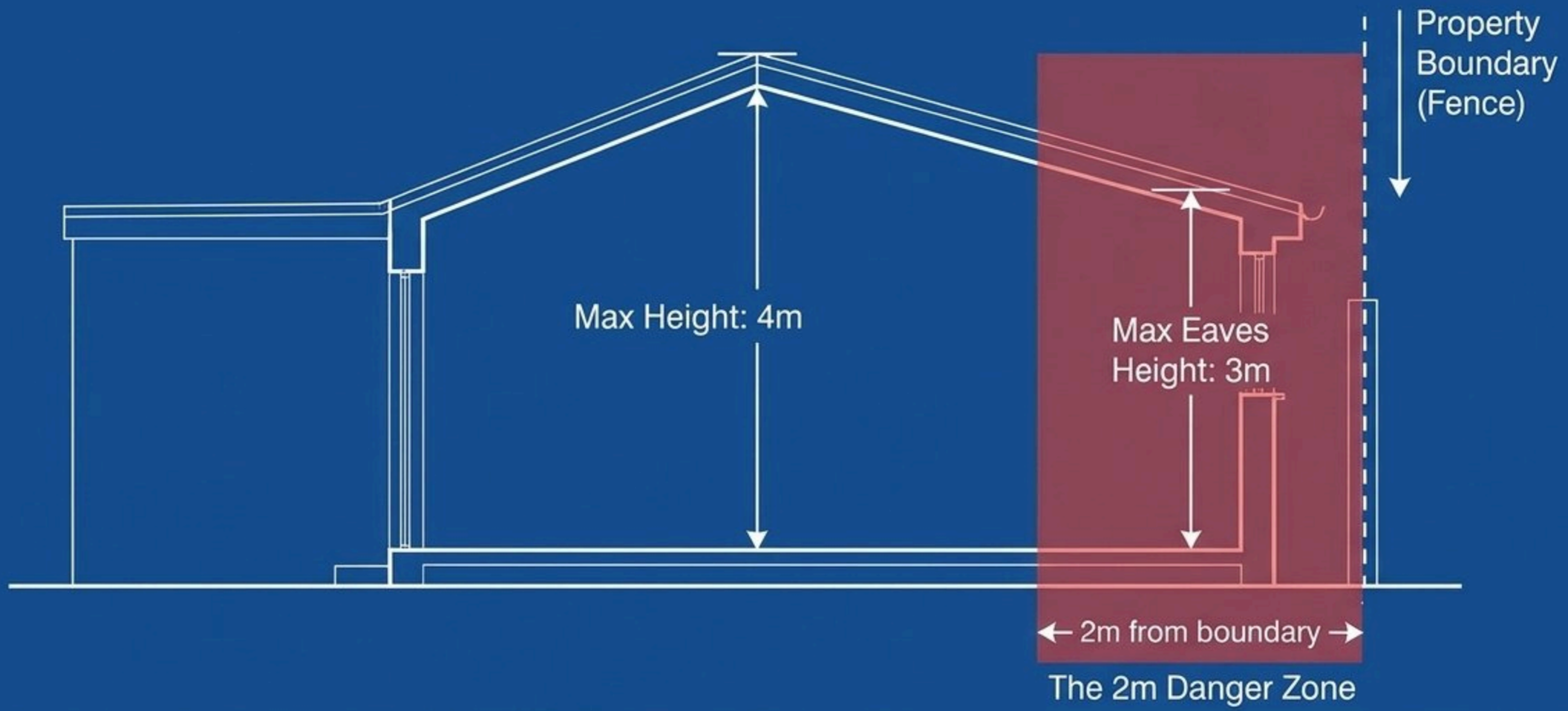


- Terraced / Semi-Detached: max depth 3 metres.
- Detached: max depth 4 metres.

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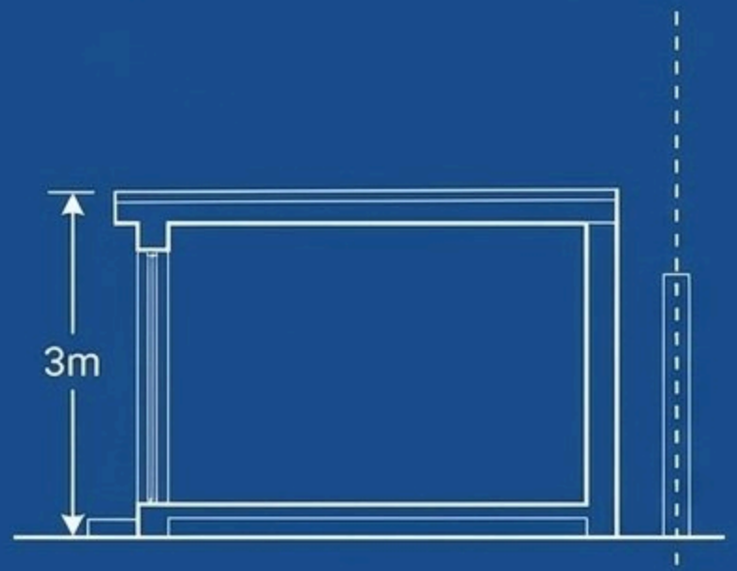
Neighbour proximity dictates your roofline limits

The maximum height for a single-storey extension is 4 metres. However, if your build comes close to your neighbour, the rules force a lower profile to prevent overshadowing.



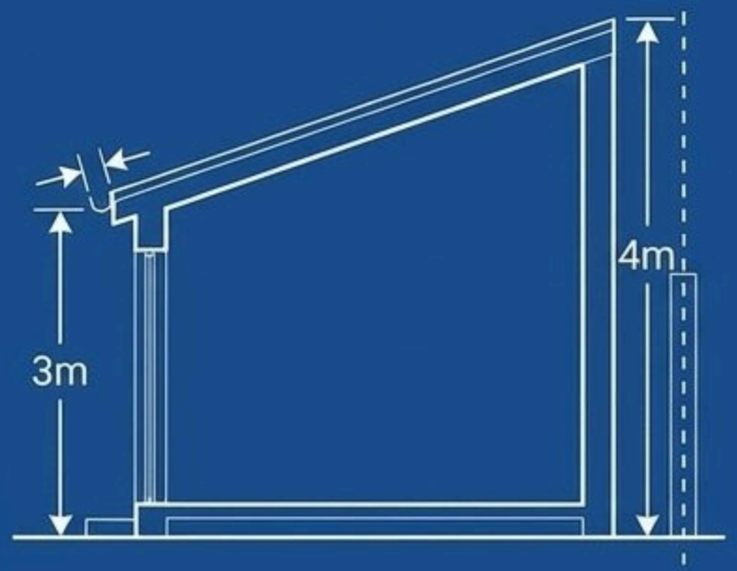
Evaluating permitted roof typologies

Flat Roof



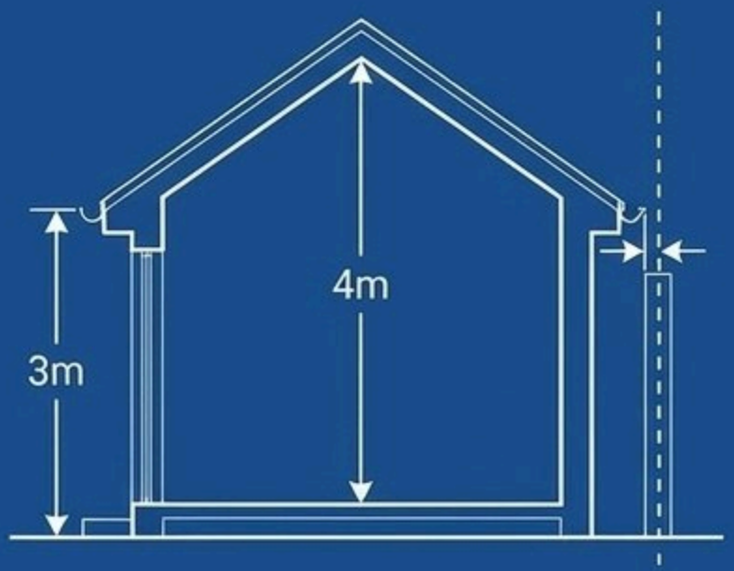
Profile stays at a constant 3m. Parapets can extend slightly higher, but the roof cannot legally be used as a terrace or balcony.

Mono-pitch (Lean-to)



Slopes up from a 3m eave to peak at a max of 4m. The detailed guidance allows the roof overhang to extend slightly beyond the 3m vertical limit.

Dual-pitch (Gable end)



Peaked roof with eaves dropping to 3m on the sides. You must leave enough room to physically maintain the gutter strictly on your side of the boundary line.

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The camouflage rule ensures visual harmony

Permitted development requires the outside materials of a new extension to look similar to the existing house. If the house has red brick walls and concrete roof tiles, the extension must match. Homes with a mix of materials are a grey area that needs expert advice.

Matched Materials



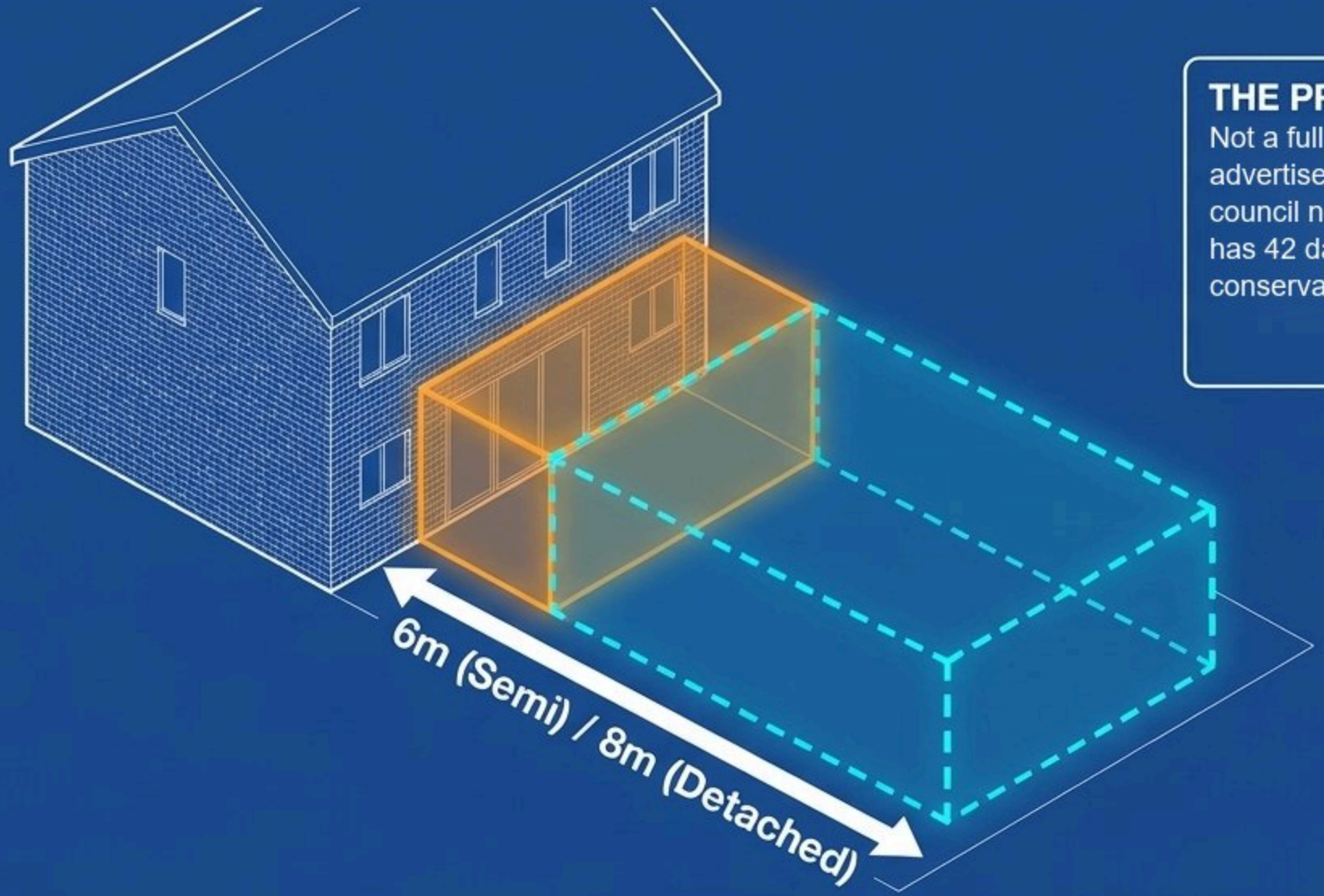
Contrasting Materials (Fails PD)



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Going deeper through prior approval (neighbour consultation)

If 3 or 4 metres doesn't give enough space, you can apply to double the depth: up to 6m for semi-detached or terraced houses and 8m for detached houses.



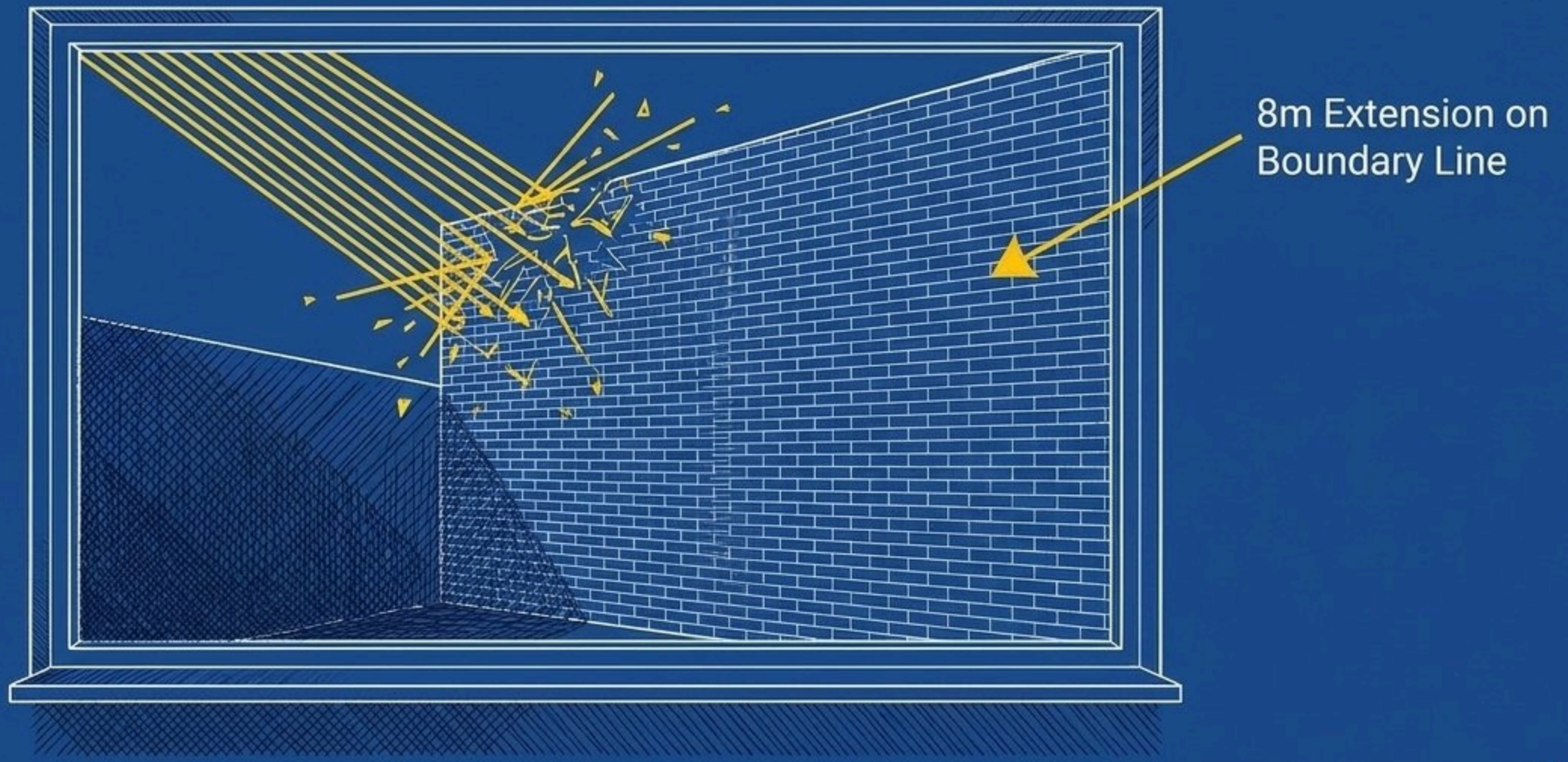
THE PROCESS

Not a full planning application and not advertised. You send basic drawings; the council notifies adjoining neighbours and has 42 days to decide. Not available in conservation areas.

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Neighbour objections: loss of light is the key test

If neighbours object, the council judges the impact on their amenity: loss of light, overshadowing, overlooking and whether the build feels overbearing. A deep extension on the boundary next to a neighbour's window is the most common reason for refusal. (The legal "right to light" is a separate civil matter.)



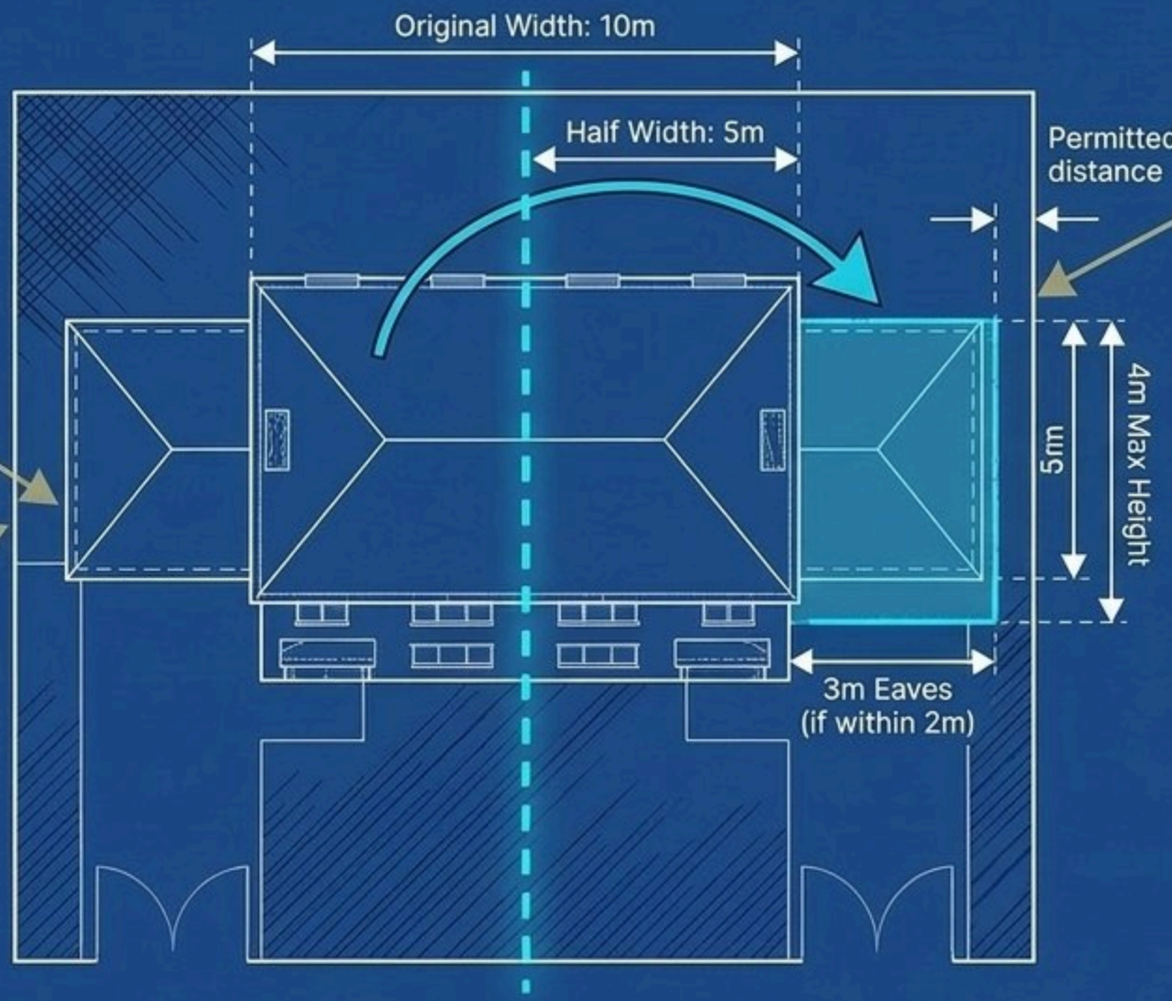
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Side extensions are governed by the half-width rule

At the ground floor, you can extend along the full depth of the house (front to back). However, the width is strictly proportionate to the original structure.

- **Max Width:** Cannot exceed 50% of the width of the existing house (e.g., A 5m wide house allows a max 2.5m side extension).

Original: 10m;
Max Extension: 5m (50%)



- **Proximity:** Permitted regardless of how close it comes to the side boundary.
- **Height limits:** Same as the rear (4m max height, 3m eaves if within 2m of boundary).

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Two-storey extensions and the 50% garden rule

Two-storey rear extension

- No deeper than **3m** from the original rear wall
- At least **7m** from the rear boundary
- Roof pitch to match the house where practical
- Side-facing upper windows obscure-glazed and fixed shut below 1.7m
- Not allowed under PD in conservation areas

3m / 7m

The 50% garden rule

All extensions and outbuildings together (not counting the original house) must not cover more than **half the land around the house**.

On small London plots this rule often limits you more than the depth rules.

Max 50%

Also not permitted development: balconies, verandas and raised platforms over 0.3m high.

The Scale of Expansion Matrix

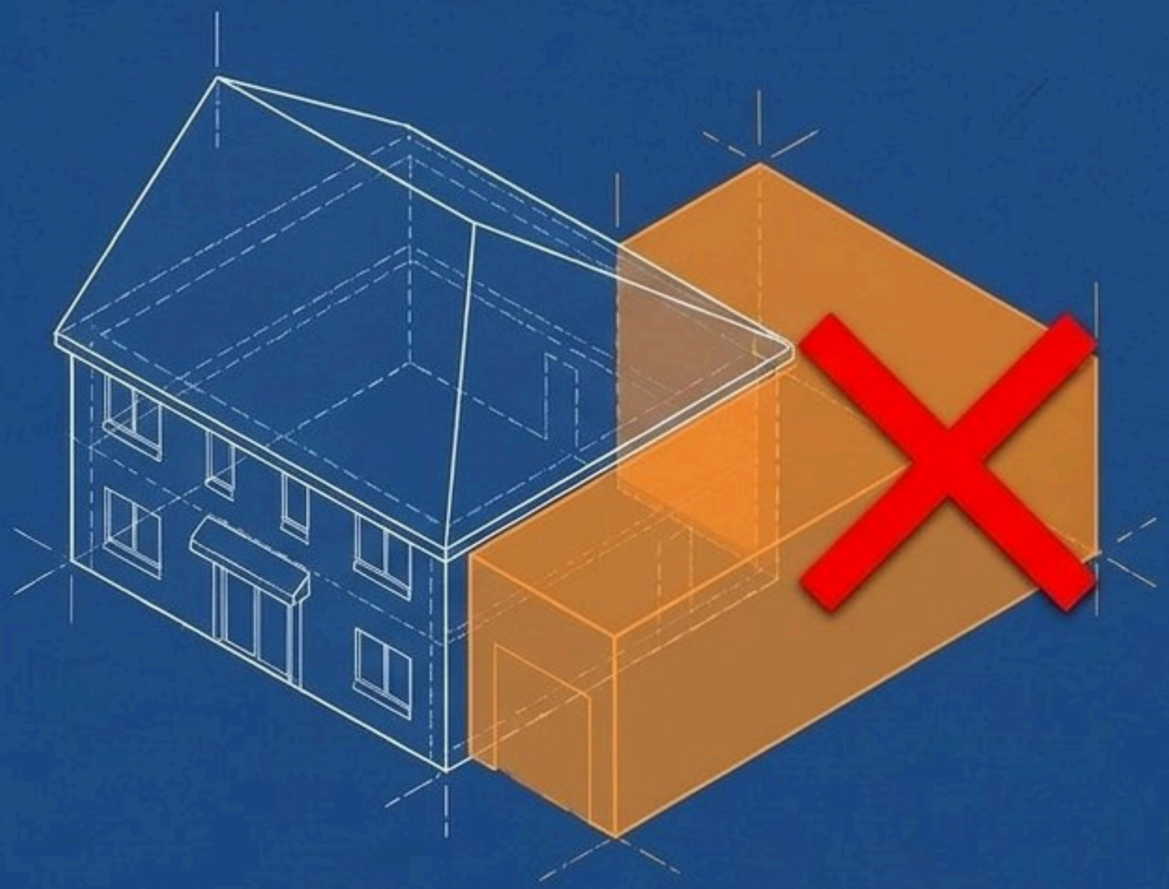
	Standard Permitted Development	Prior Approval
Semi-Detached / Terraced	3m Max Depth	6m Max Depth
Detached	4m Max Depth	8m Max Depth

Regardless of depth, absolute max height is capped at 4m.

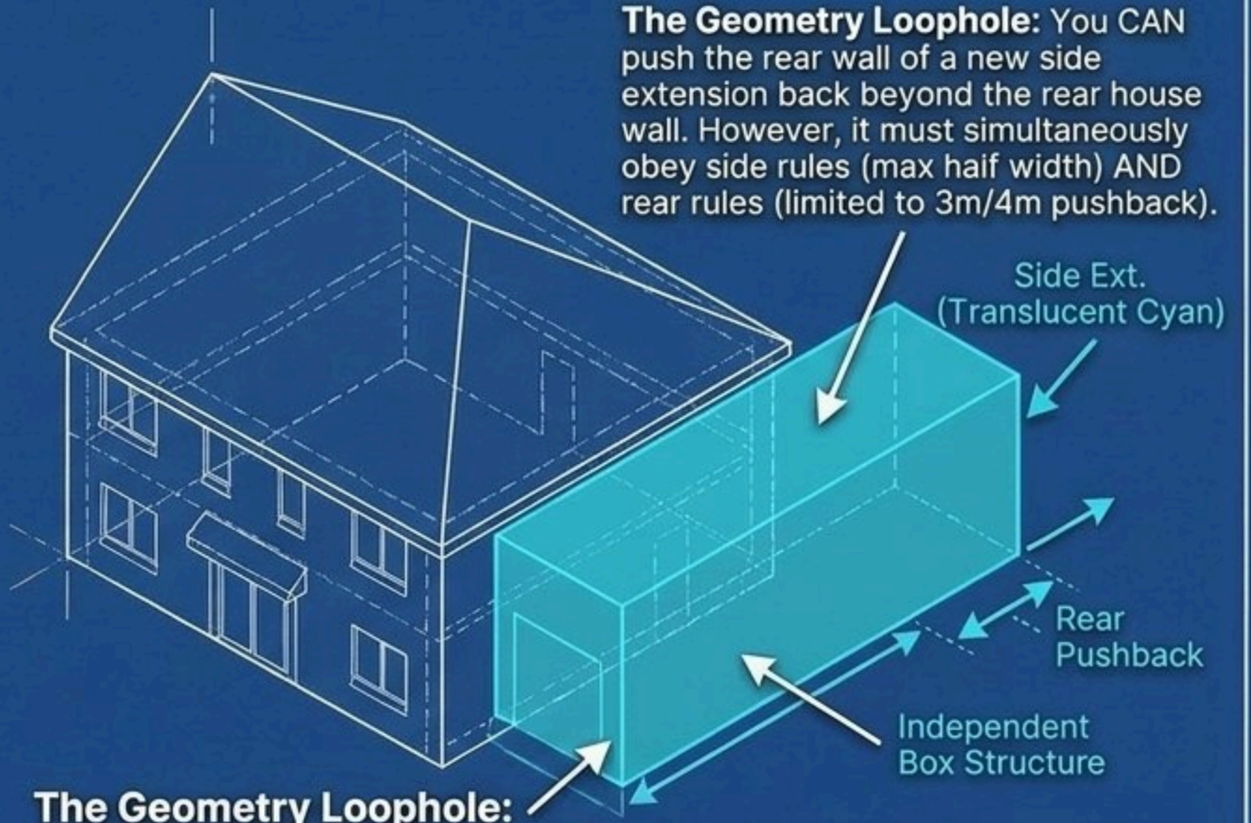
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The Wrap-around Reality Check

Combining a side and rear extension into a continuous L-shape (a wrap-around) is generally NOT allowed under Permitted Development.



L-Shape Wrap-around: **NOT PERMITTED**



The Geometry Loophole: You CAN push the rear wall of a new side extension **back beyond the rear** house wall. However, it **must simultaneously** obey side rules (max half width) AND rear rules (limited to 3m/4m pushback).

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When Permitted Development Rights vanish

Most UK houses have PD rights, but flats and maisonettes have none, listed buildings need consent, and councils can remove rights with Article 4 directions. Conservation areas keep reduced rights: no side, two-storey or 6m/8m extensions.



Conservation Areas & Listed Buildings



Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

PD RIGHTS REMOVED



National Parks (e.g., Peak District)



New Housing Estates - rights stripped by developers

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Conservation areas: what changes

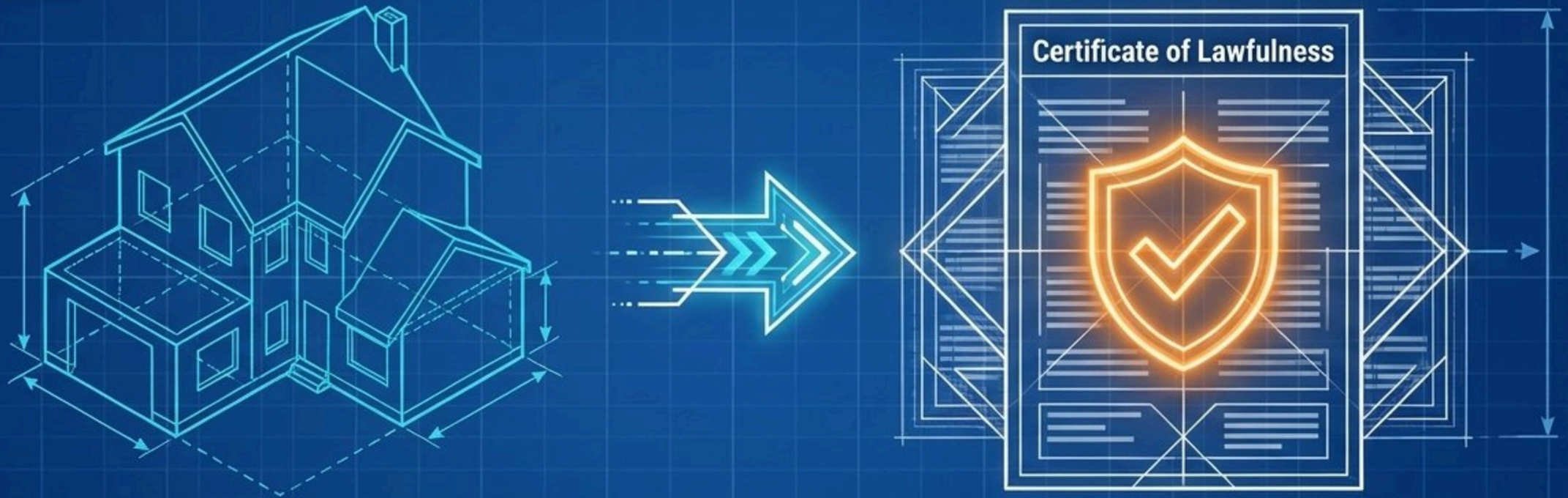
Much of Hampstead, Highgate, Belsize Park, Muswell Hill and Notting Hill sits in conservation areas. Your PD rights shrink there:

Type of work	Ordinary house	Conservation area
Single-storey rear extension (3m / 4m)	Allowed	Allowed
Larger home extension (6m / 8m)	Prior approval	Not allowed
Side extension	Allowed	Not allowed
Two-storey rear extension	Allowed	Not allowed
Cladding the outside walls	Allowed	Not allowed

Check your council's conservation area map before you design.

Securing the Golden Ticket: The Certificate of Lawfulness

Before breaking ground, experts strongly advise applying to the local council for a Certificate of Lawfulness.



Blueprint Extension

Legal Confirmation & Peace of Mind

It may seem odd to apply for something that needs no planning permission, but this certificate is legal proof that your build is lawful. If your plans genuinely meet the PD rules, the council must grant it; if not, it will refuse and explain why. It gives peace of mind during the build and is a vital document when you sell.

NOTE: Real-world houses are rarely perfect boxes. Always consult a planner or architect to navigate Building Regulations, the Party Wall Act, and local nuances.

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Not sure what your house allows?

Real houses are rarely perfect boxes. Arkivon Group builds rear, side return and loft extensions across North and West London. Book a free site visit and we'll tell you whether your plans fit permitted development or need planning.

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General summary of permitted development for houses in England as at October 2026 (GPDO 2015 as amended and government technical guidance). Not legal advice: confirm with your council or an architect before starting work. Arkivon Group Ltd, 136 High Road, London NW10 2PJ. Company no. 17080361.