

# Factsheet: BRE 25° and 45° Rules of Thumb

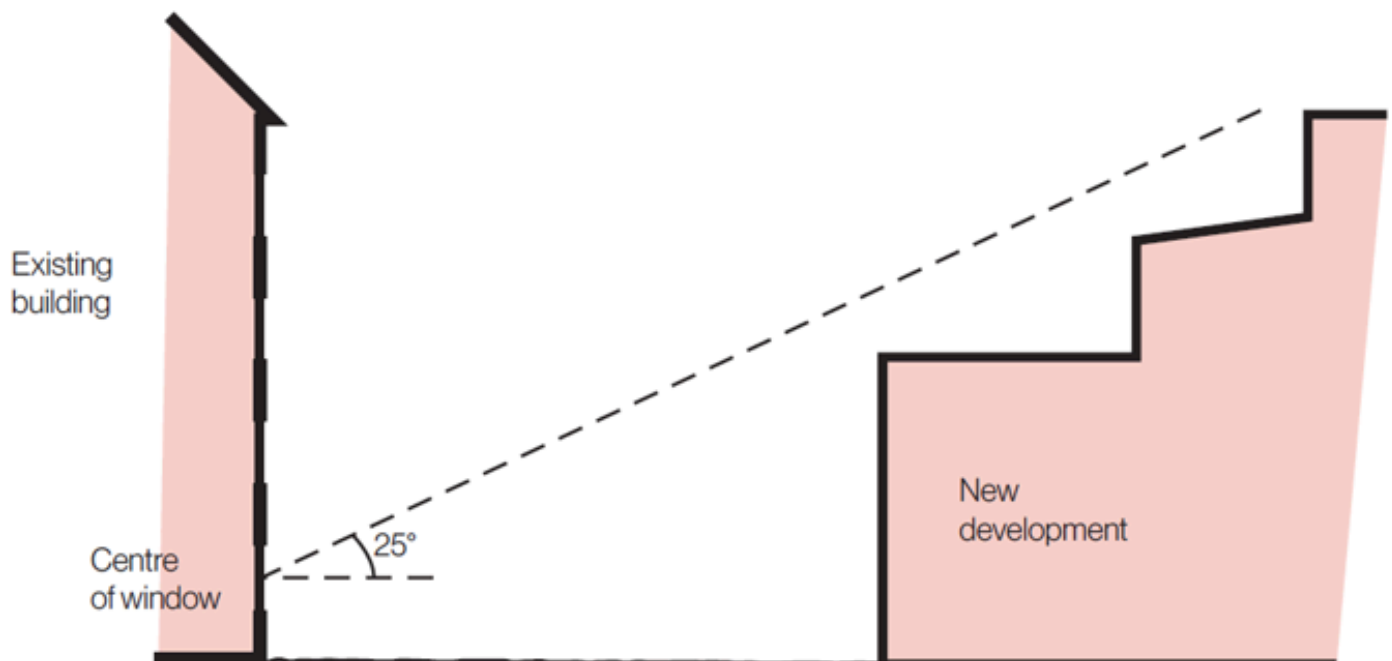
The daylight and sunlight assessments outlined in the BRE guide, Site layout planning for daylight and sunlight: a guide to good practice, is widely used by local planning authorities in the UK to assess whether development proposals would avoid unacceptable obstruction or overshadowing of neighbouring properties.

This factsheet explains the BRE 25° and 45° rules of thumb used as initial screening tests in daylight and sunlight assessments. They help identify whether a proposed building or extension is likely to require more detailed technical assessment, such as the Vertical Sky Component test, the daylight distribution test, or sunlight availability test.

## The 25° Rule of Thumb

The 25° rule is generally used where a proposed building or extension would face an existing window. It considers the angle of obstruction above the horizontal, measured from a point on the affected window towards the top of the proposed development.

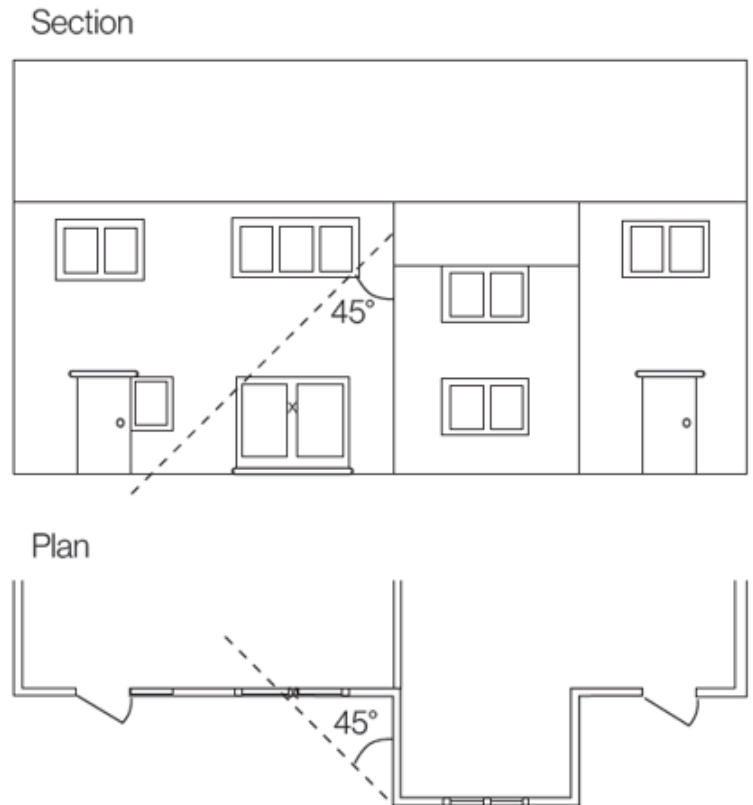
- Basic principle: if the proposed development subtends an angle of less than 25° above the horizontal, the retained daylight is usually unlikely to be significantly affected.
- If the 25° line is exceeded: this does not automatically mean the proposal is unacceptable, but it is a trigger for a more detailed assessment.
- Typical follow-up tests: Vertical Sky Component, daylight distribution/no-sky line assessment (where layouts are known).



## The 45° Rule of Thumb

The 45° rule is commonly used for extensions projecting at right angles to a neighbouring window. It is intended to identify whether the extension could materially obstruct diffuse daylight to that window.

- **Plan test:** draw a 45° line diagonally back towards the window wall from the end of the extension.
- **Elevation test:** draw a 45° line diagonally down away from the top corner of the extension towards the window wall (If the extension has a pitched roof then the top of the extension can be taken as the height of its roof halfway along the slope).
- **Key trigger:** where the centre of the window lies on the extension side of the 45° angle in both plan and elevation, a significant amount of light may be blocked and a more detailed assessment is normally appropriate.



## How to Use the Rules in Practice

1. Identify the potentially affected neighbouring windows, focusing on habitable rooms such as living rooms, kitchens and bedrooms.
2. Establish whether the proposed development is opposite the window, in which case the 25° test may be relevant, or projects across the window's outlook, in which case the 45° test may be relevant.
3. Apply the appropriate angular test as an initial screening exercise.
4. If the proposal passes the relevant rule, a detailed daylight assessment may not be necessary, subject to local planning requirements and site context.
5. If the proposal fails the rule, commission or prepare a more detailed BRE assessment to quantify the likely effect.

## Important Limitations

- The rules are screening tools only; they are not a substitute for a full technical assessment where material impacts are possible.
- They should be interpreted flexibly, particularly in dense urban environments or where existing obstructions already limit available light.
- They are generally relevant to planning daylight and sunlight considerations, not legal rights to light assessments.
- Local planning authorities may apply BRE guidance differently, and some may request detailed analysis even where a proposal appears to satisfy a rule of thumb.
- The results should be considered alongside the overall planning context, including building orientation, room use, window size, existing obstructions and retained amenity.

## Quick Reference

| Rule     | Used for                                                     | Trigger for further assessment                                      |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 25° rule | Development opposite an existing window                      | Proposed obstruction exceeds a 25° angle above the horizontal       |
| 45° rule | Extensions projecting across a neighbouring window's outlook | Window centre falls within the 45° angle in both plan and elevation |

The 25° and 45° rules provide a quick, proportionate way to screen potential daylight impacts at an early stage. Passing the rules may indicate a low risk of material daylight loss, while failing them should be treated as a prompt for more detailed BRE analysis rather than a definitive planning objection.