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APPENDIX 1: Residential extensions and alterations

Introduction

1. House extensions and other alterations can provide valuable additional space for households and improve the quality of accommodation. However, if not thoughtfully designed and carried out, they can lead to problems for adjoining householders and can contribute to a decline in residential amenity.
2. In some cases planning permission is not needed due to permitted development rights. [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) Order 2015](#)¹ is the principal order which sets out when planning permission is not needed, provided that no restrictive condition is attached or that the development is exempt from the permitted development rights through an 'Article 4' or 'Article 3' direction.
3. Although not definitive, it is recommended that in the first instance the [Planning Portal](#)² is looked at, to review guidance on permitted development and further information on residential alterations and extensions.
4. To view guidance on extensions for houses which are listed or within a conservation area please see Section 6.
5. If an extension is for someone with a disability it is best to consult with planning officers at an early stage through the LPA's pre-application services. Wherever possible, the LPAs will support proposals that are for the sole benefit of someone with a disability. However, applications will still need to apply the design principles in this SPD to ensure neighbours are not adversely affected by the proposals.

Residential extensions

Visual impact

6. Extensions and alterations should relate well to the main dwelling and character of the area. They should generally follow the same architectural style and use the same materials as the original dwelling. Proposals should also respect the character of the area, including building form and layout, architectural style and materials.
7. Occasionally, extensions which differ or even contrast with the original property can be acceptable. However, even where materials or designs contrast there should still be a harmonious relationship with the main body of the property being extended.

¹<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/596/contents/made>

²<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/>

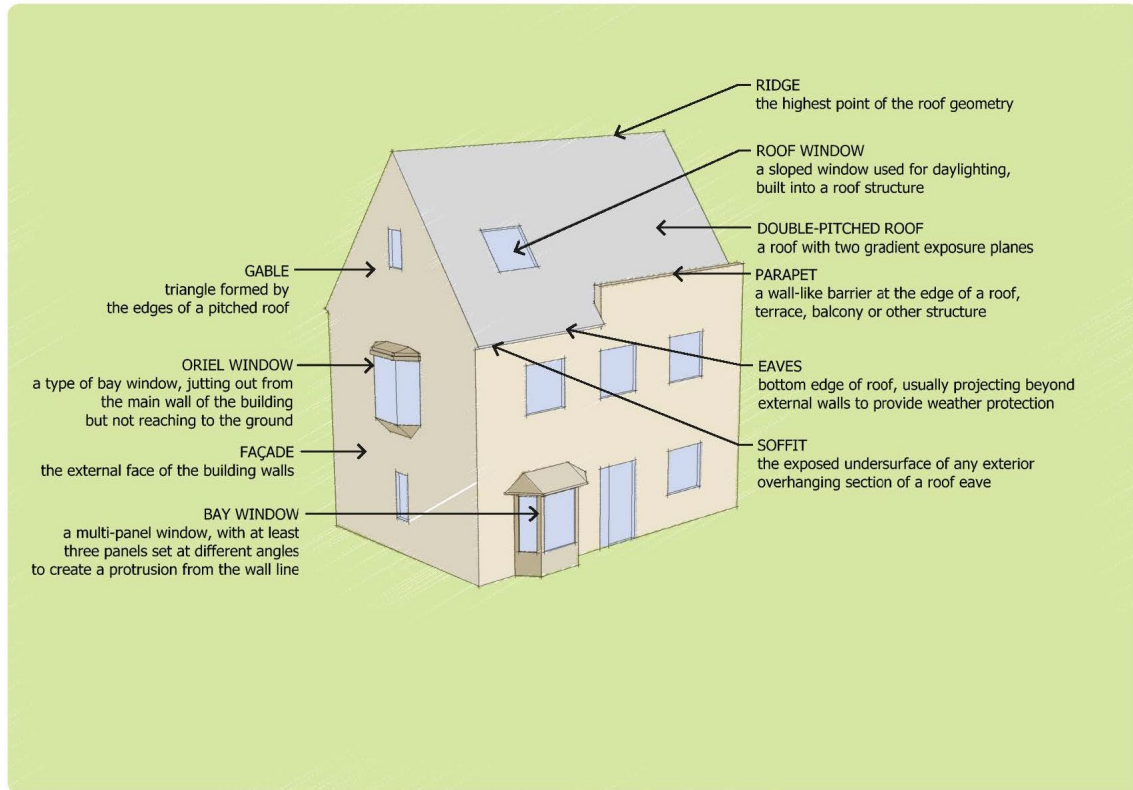


Figure 1: Technical terms for house design

Materials

8. Materials used in house alterations or extensions should generally match those of the existing house and relate to the surrounding area. In particular it is important to consider the impact of exposure and weathering on materials to ensure they will weather attractively. For example, in the PPA specifically, when using render, silicone render should be used to reduce the risk of staining and algae growth that has affected many buildings completed in recent years.
9. It is also important to ensure that small but important details, such as mortar colour and bonding style, are correct.
10. A condition may be applied to a planning permission to require particular materials to be used. For further guidance please see APPENDIX 2: Specific materials for the PPA and TTV.

Roofs

11. The shape, pitch and colour of roofs (and the roofing materials) on house extensions should normally mirror those of the original home unless there are clear reasons why this is not reasonable or practicable.
12. Flat roofs will be discouraged where they are not a feature of the original house although they can sometimes be acceptable at the rear of properties, particularly where they are not prominent and help to reduce the height of an extension.

- 13. Green roofs will be encouraged where appropriate to support biodiversity, rainwater run-off attenuation and visual amenity etc.
- 14. When considering the roof design and orientation, the LPAs will also consider the potential for installing solar photovoltaic or thermal renewable energy.



Figure 2: Technical terms for roof designs

Windows

- 15. The positioning and design of windows is crucial to achieving a unified exterior. The windows in an extension should reflect the proportions of the existing windows. The size, shape and materials of windows should correspond with the existing windows and the horizontal and/or vertical divisions of individual windows should match.
- 16. Habitable room³ windows should be positioned to maximise available daylight and sunlight and should normally be located to the front or rear of the dwelling.

Privacy

- 17. The LPAs have a responsibility to protect the existing amenities of all residents. Any alteration or extension should not have an unacceptable effect on the

³For the purposes of this document a habitable room is defined as a room used, or intended to be used, for dwellinghouse purposes (such as a livingroom, bedroom or kitchen).

standard of living offered to occupants of homes that are to be extended and their neighbouring properties.

18. The levels of privacy expected from a residential environment will differ depending upon the location. For example, within densely developed contexts such as city, town or neighbourhood centres, or areas with a medieval street pattern, it is reasonable to assume that privacy might be less than in lower-density neighbourhoods and in these circumstances other design solutions may be appropriate such as oriel windows for habitable rooms and obscured glazing in other rooms.
19. Habitable room windows facing directly opposite one another should be a minimum of 21m apart for a two-storey development, as shown below. This distance should be increased to when one or more of the buildings are three-storeys in height or there is a drop in levels. An exception may be allowed where the proposed extension is a single storey, and/or there is a boundary wall between the properties.

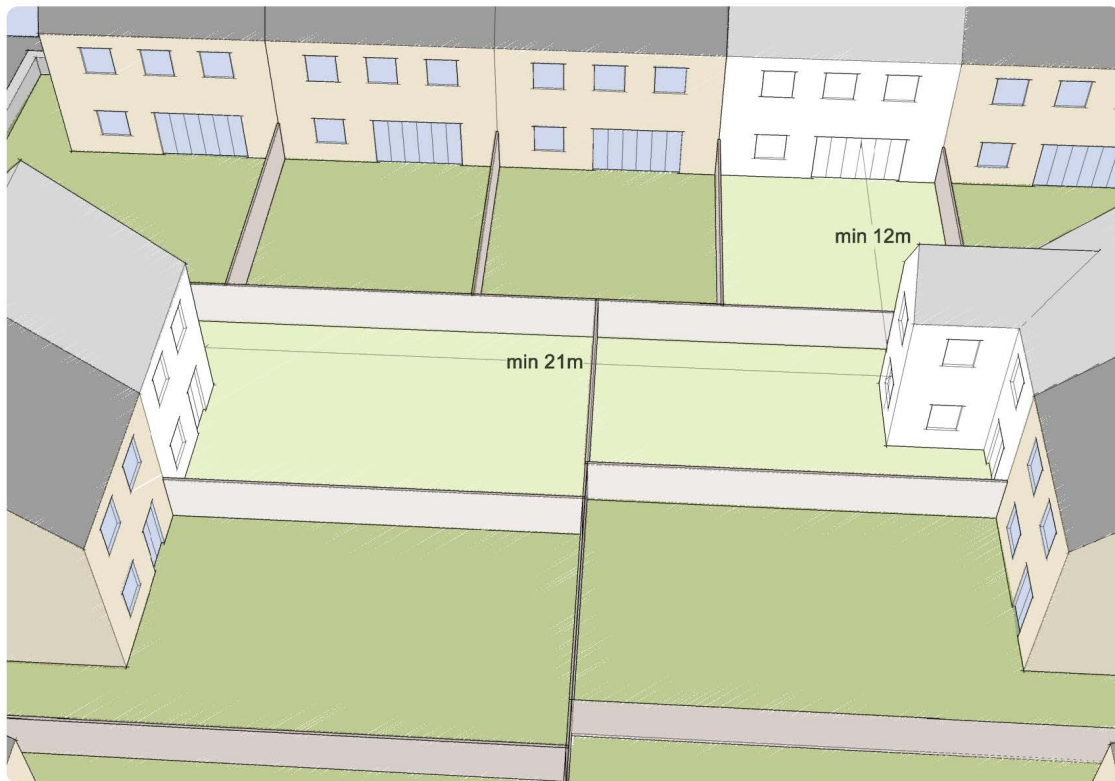


Figure 3: Minimum distance between habitable rooms

20. Overlooking of gardens may be unacceptable where it would result in an intrusive, direct and uninterrupted view from a main room to the most private area of the garden. This is often the main sitting out area adjacent to the property of the neighbours' house. In predominantly urban areas, as a general rule this area is the first 3-4 metres of a rear garden closest to the residential property.

21. Problems concerning privacy can sometimes be overcome by relocating windows or by the installation of roof lights. Obscure glass can be an appropriate solution if the facing window serves a non-habitable room. Planning conditions may be applied by the LPAs to planning permissions so that these solutions continue to protect neighbouring resident's amenity once the development is complete.

Balconies and roof gardens

22. Balconies and roof gardens can be unacceptable in higher density areas because of the impact they can have on the privacy of neighbours' gardens or habitable rooms. In assessing a proposal for a balcony or roof garden the degree of overlooking will be considered.
23. As well as overlooking, balconies can also create generate additional amenity impacts if they are positioned close to the site boundary such as noise. Consideration should be given to the location of any proposed balcony to prevent amenity impact to neighbouring properties.
24. Alternative designs, such as setting back the balcony/roof garden in rear extensions to reduce overlooking or a privacy screen will be considered on a case by case basis.

Decking, terraces and patios

25. Decking and other similar developments can lead to problems of overlooking and affect the amenity of neighbours, particularly in sloping gardens, and will therefore be resisted if they would create an unacceptable loss of privacy for neighbouring properties. However it is also important to note that decking, particularly in sloping gardens, could be classed as permitted and therefore cannot be controlled through planning legislation.
26. Screening or fencing may be used to overcome any overlooking problems but should be of a scale that does not unreasonably affect the outlook or daylight of the neighbouring property. Overlooking can also be reduced by positioning decking, a terrace or patio away from the property boundary.

Outlook

27. While views from a private house or garden are not safeguarded by planning legislation, an extension should not be constructed in close proximity to either a habitable room window of a neighbouring property or its private garden where it would have an unacceptable overbearing effect on a household's outlook.
28. In order to protect the outlook of neighbouring properties, the minimum distance between a main habitable room window and a blank wall, should be at least 12m. This distance should be increased for a three-storey development, normally to at least 15m.

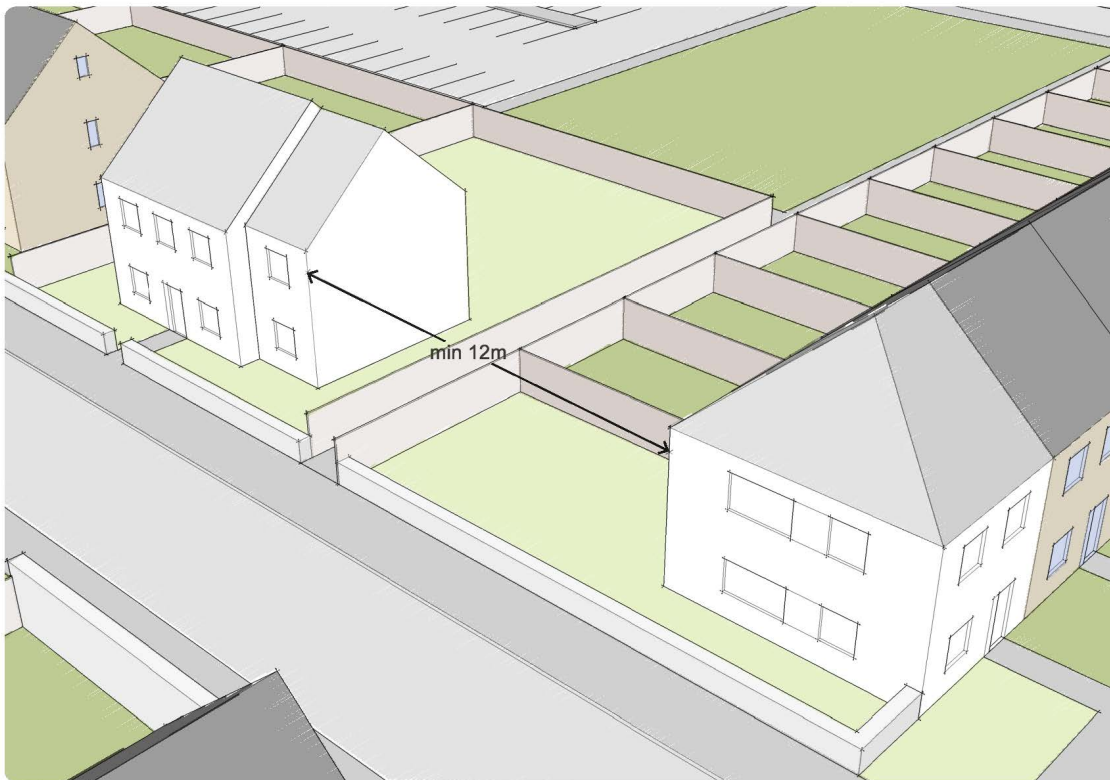


Figure 4: Distance between habitable room window and blank facing wall

29. Where there is a difference in ground levels these should be taken into account and the distance increased, normally by an extra 3 meters for every 2 meters increase in height.

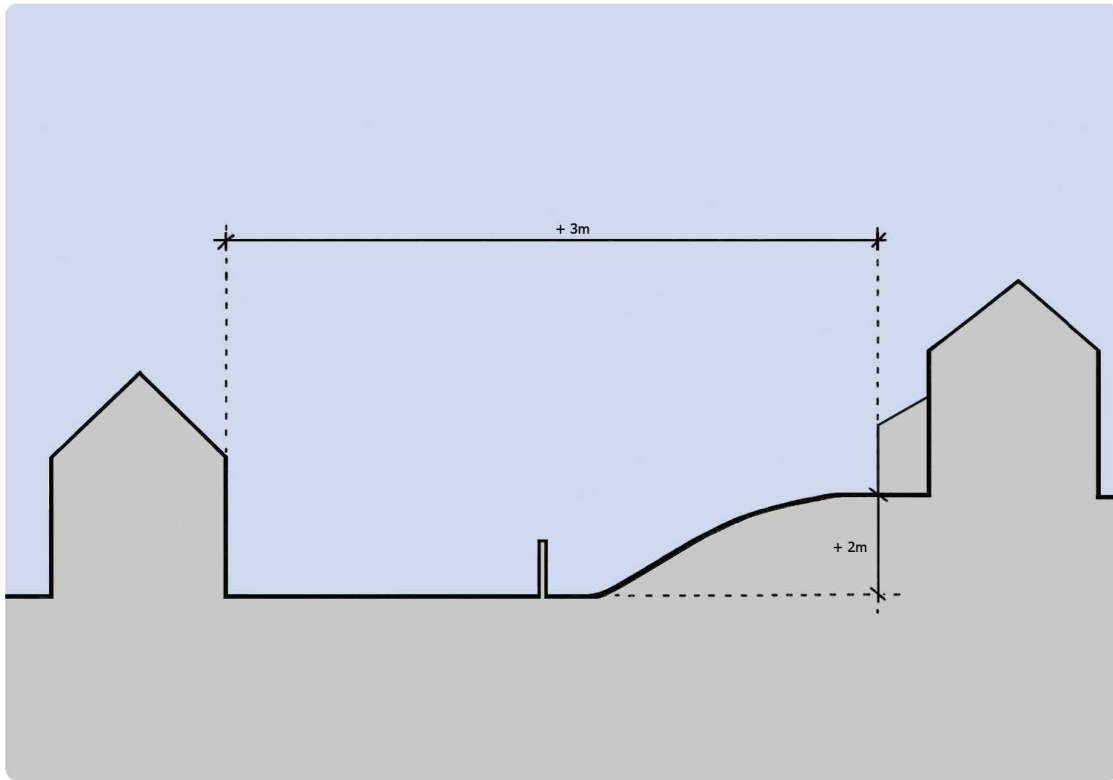


Figure 5: Difference in ground level

Daylight and sunlight

30. Extensions should not result in a significant loss of daylight or sunlight to habitable rooms of neighbouring properties, such as kitchens, living rooms or bedrooms. An extension should also not lead to an unsatisfactory loss of light to the property being extended.
31. Proposals which would result in a harmful loss of daylight or sunlight to a neighbouring property will be refused. In order to ensure that a proposed development will not cause a harmful loss of daylight the 45 degree guideline should be followed.

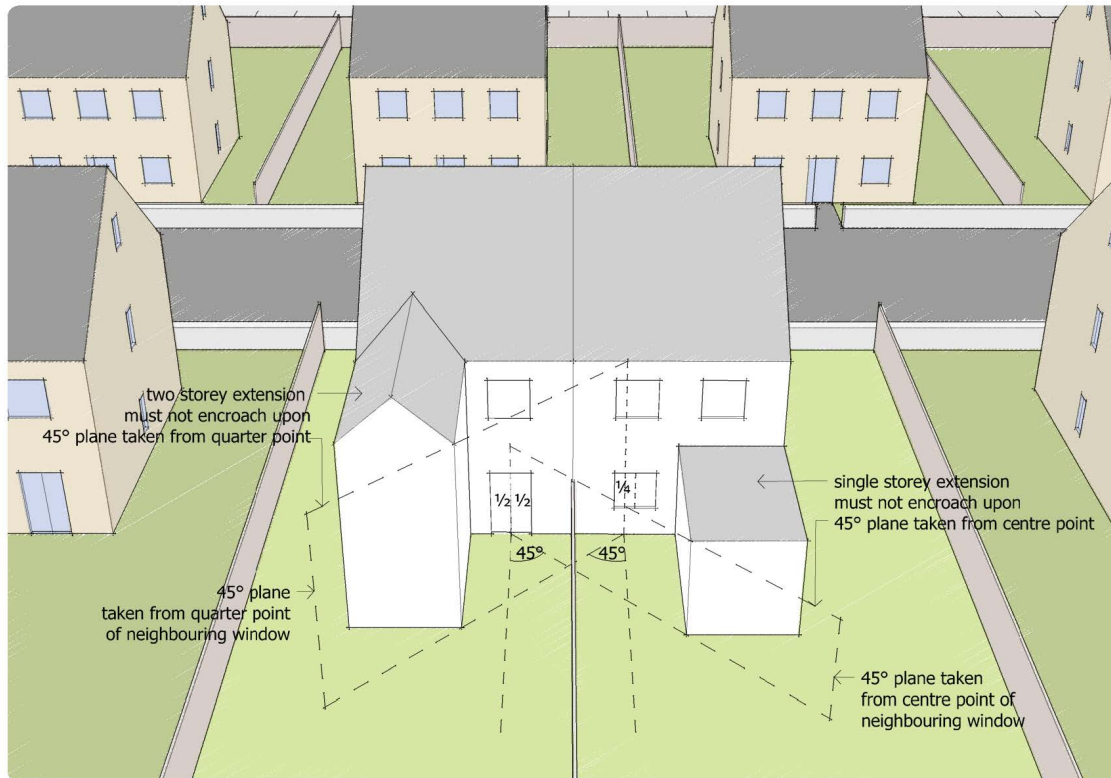


Figure 6: The 45 degree guideline

32. An imaginary line at an angle of 45 degrees is drawn from a point within the window of the closest ground floor habitable room of the neighbouring property towards and across the site of the proposed extension or new development. If there is more than one window lighting this room, the line is taken from the window which is the main source of light. When elevated to an angle of 25 degrees above horizontal, this line will show the maximum width and/or depth that a proposed extension can build up to without unreasonably obstructing light or views to a neighbouring property.
33. The 45 degree guideline is relevant to both single and two-storey house extensions. For a single-storey extension, the line is drawn from the mid-point of the window. For a two-storey extension, the line is taken from the quarter point closest to the boundary.
34. House extensions are normally only considered acceptable if they do not cross the 45 degree line when elevated to 25 degrees. Relaxation of this guideline may be considered for light-weight, transparent structures such as conservatories, or where the orientation of the properties concerned means that the guideline can be relaxed. Relaxation may also be considered where there is a difference in ground levels between adjacent sites or where there is a high boundary wall between two properties.

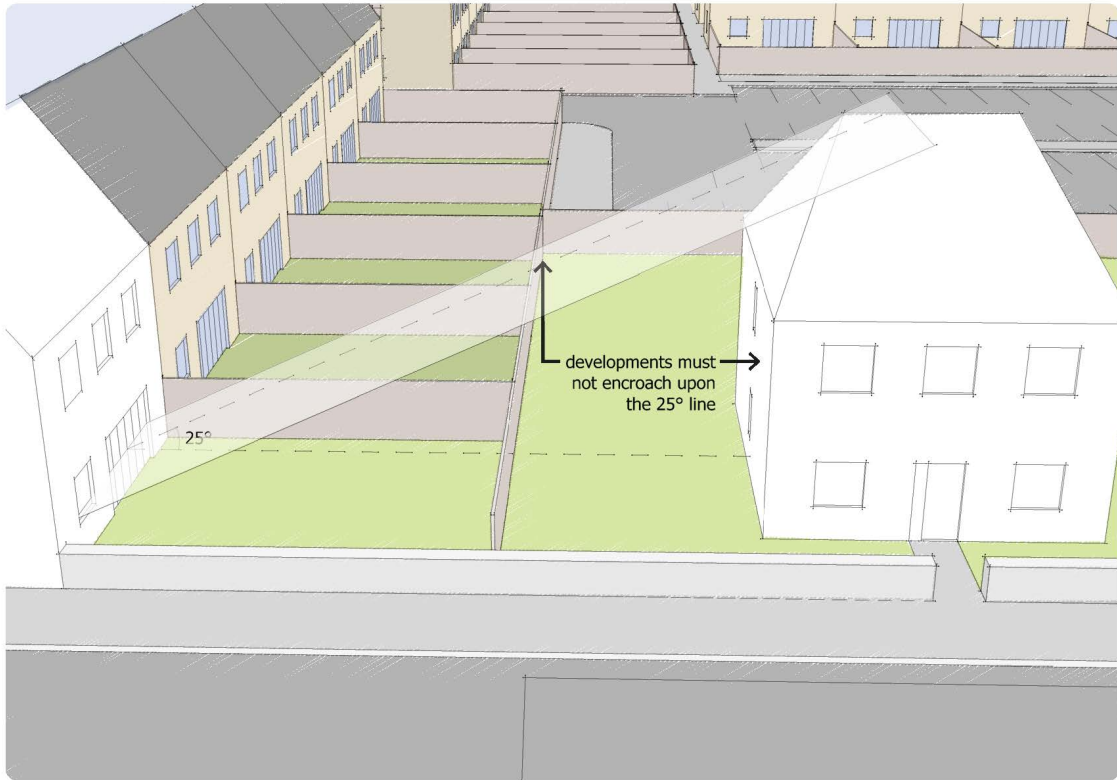


Figure 7: The 25 degree guideline

Front extensions

35. The front of a dwelling is usually the most visible part of the building. It often follows a clear/defined building line, helping to define the character of the street.
36. Extensions that project forward of the existing house will generally be resisted. Where a street has a clear established building line, the only development that might be acceptable at the front is likely to be a small, sympathetically designed porch. In certain circumstances, an exception may be allowed where there is no obvious building line, where the property is set back from other houses, or where front extensions are a feature of houses in the street or dwellings in more rural locations where there is no 'street scene'.



Figure 8: Front extensions

Side extensions

37. In order to ensure that a side extension does not over-dominate the existing house or street-scene, it should generally be subordinate (smaller) in scale to the original dwelling and set back from the front of the property, especially in a street characterised by regularly spaced properties of similar design and scale.
38. The individual characteristics of the site and proposal will determine the exact set back distance required, however a distance less than 1m will rarely be considered acceptable.
39. Where an extension is set back, the roof of the extension should be lower than that of the main house. This ensures that the extension is subordinate. Side extensions should also be of a width to ensure they appear less important than the original dwelling.
40. In some situations the erection of a two-storey side extension could create or contribute to an effect known as 'terracing'. This is where side extensions almost link up with neighbouring properties, leading to the appearance of a terraced street. Piecemeal joining up of individual properties is also likely to appear visually obtrusive and the loss of space can be harmful to the whole character and amenity of an area.



Figure 9: Side extensions and terracing effect

41. To avoid a terracing effect, a gap should be left between the extension and the boundary with the neighbouring property. This gap should generally be at least 1.5m wide. Where it is not feasible to leave a gap, an alternative is to set the extension further back from the front of the house. The required set-back distance to avoid the appearance of terracing will vary, however a set-back distance of at least 2m may be necessary.
42. Where there is an existing ground floor extension that is not set back from the front of the house, then a proposed first floor extension should normally be set back by at least 2m to ensure that subordination is maintained and terracing avoided.
43. Exceptions to these guidelines may be allowed in detached buildings which have their own individual design or can demonstrate exceptional architectural merit.

Corner plot extensions

44. A corner extension should demonstrate that it will have a positive effect on the street-scene. Blank walls should be avoided, as they detract from the street-scene and reduce natural surveillance.

Rear extensions

45. An extension at the rear of a dwelling is usually less visible than a side or front extension; however it can sometimes be seen from public areas. A rear extension should be in keeping with the main dwelling and the character of the area. An extension that follows an unusual layout may affect the character of the area and will therefore need careful consideration. In addition, the need to retain external amenity space should also be considered.

Roof extensions

46. Extending into roof space is a popular way of creating more residential accommodation and most roof extensions are permitted development as long as the ridge height is not changing. Where permission is needed, it is important to consider the height and ensure all roof alterations are of a high quality and relate well to the original home and the street-scene.
47. Wherever possible, a roof extension should be located at the rear of the property to minimise its impact on the street. Where the rear of the building is very prominent, such as at the end of a terrace or street, roof extensions should be of exceptional quality to be acceptable and conditions on planning applications may be necessary to limit the impact on neighbour privacy. Side extensions on hipped roofs are also particularly sensitive because of their prominence and impact on the symmetry of a building.
48. Roof windows and skylights usually lie flush with the profile of the roof. Providing enough head room can be created, these are normally the best option for roof extensions as they allow the profile of the roof to remain intact and are likely to have less visual impact on neighbouring properties.

Dormer windows

49. Proposals for dormer windows will be considered in the context of their impact on the dwelling, the street-scene and neighbours' amenity. Dormer windows should not dominate a building and should sit comfortably within the roof space. If it is necessary to create a large area in the roof space, it is generally preferable to construct a number of small dormers rather than a single large roof extension.

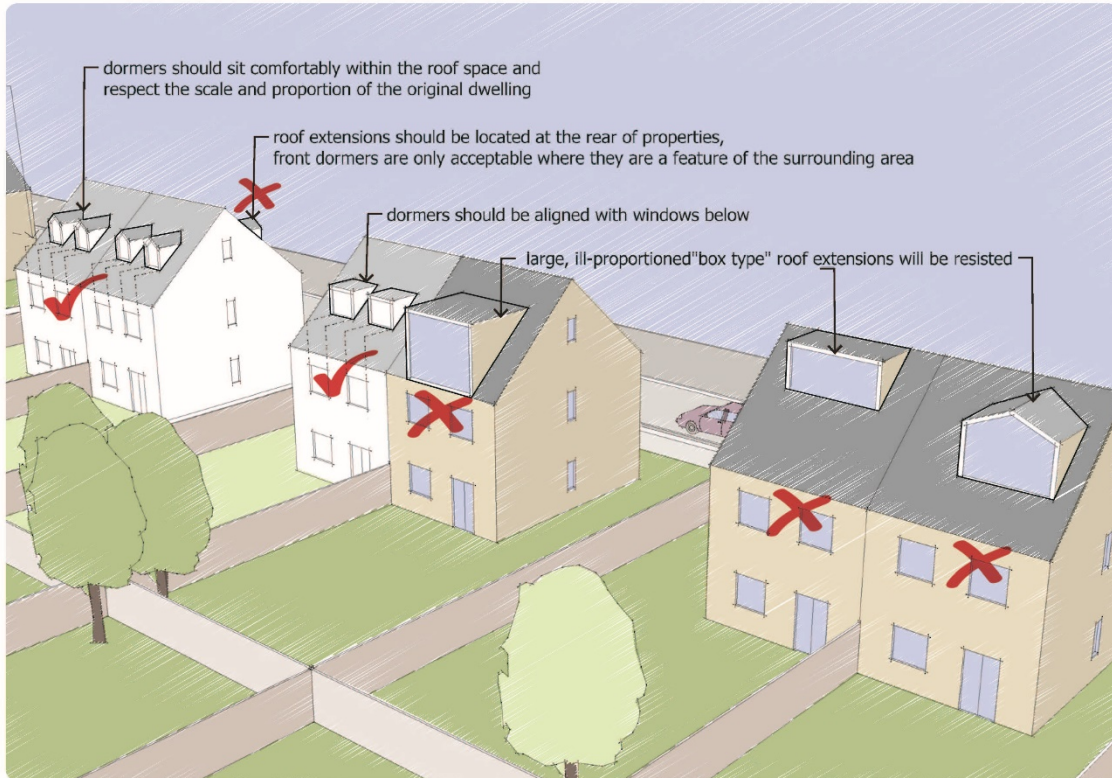


Figure 10: Dormer windows

50. Dormer windows should relate well to the building with respect to materials, scale, shape and angle of roof. The front and sides of the dormer should be covered in a material that matches, or is in harmony with, that of the existing roof. The style and sub-division of windows should relate to those that exist elsewhere on the building.
51. The positioning of dormer windows is important. They should not appear squashed towards any of the roof edges, and should be proportionate to the existing windows below.
52. Dormer windows are only acceptable on the front roof of a property if this is a feature of nearby properties and if they are sensitively designed and located.
53. Dormer windows on side roofs are particularly sensitive because of their prominence and impact on the symmetry of a building. Side dormers that unbalance the symmetry of a building are generally unacceptable. Only small, appropriately designed and positioned dormers are likely to be acceptable.
54. Dormer windows are generally more appropriate at the rear of a property providing they are located below ridge height and are sympathetically designed. Where the rear of the building is very prominent, such as at the end of some terraces, design criteria will be stricter.

55. It is particularly important to ensure that the positioning of dormer windows does not cause harm to the privacy of neighbouring properties and conditions may be added to planning applications with regards to obscure glazing and non-opening windows.

Boundary walls and fences

56. Boundary walls and fences mark the boundary of a property and maintain the privacy and security of occupiers. The design and location of walls and fences can however have a significant impact on the appearance of the street scene and on highway safety.

57. Whether a planning application needs to be submitted when building or replacing a fence, garden wall or gate depends on a number of factors, including the height and position. However, many modern dwellings also have permitted development rights removed.

Visual impact

58. The height and appearance of walls and fences should reflect the character of the existing street-scene. Materials should relate to their surroundings in respect of colour and texture.

59. Removal of any enclosure such as walls within a Conservation Area can have a negative impact on its setting, and may be resisted in the case of historic stone walls, for example, or boundaries which contribute the character of the Conservation Area. Examples and descriptions of walls of particular importance can be found in Conservation Area Appraisals which have been carried out in some towns and villages.

60. For further information on the historic environment please see guidance at DEV21 and APPENDIX 5: New work in conservation areas.

61. A wall or fence positioned at the front of the property is usually sensitive and should not normally be of a height or material that would appear bland, intimidating or out of character with its surroundings.

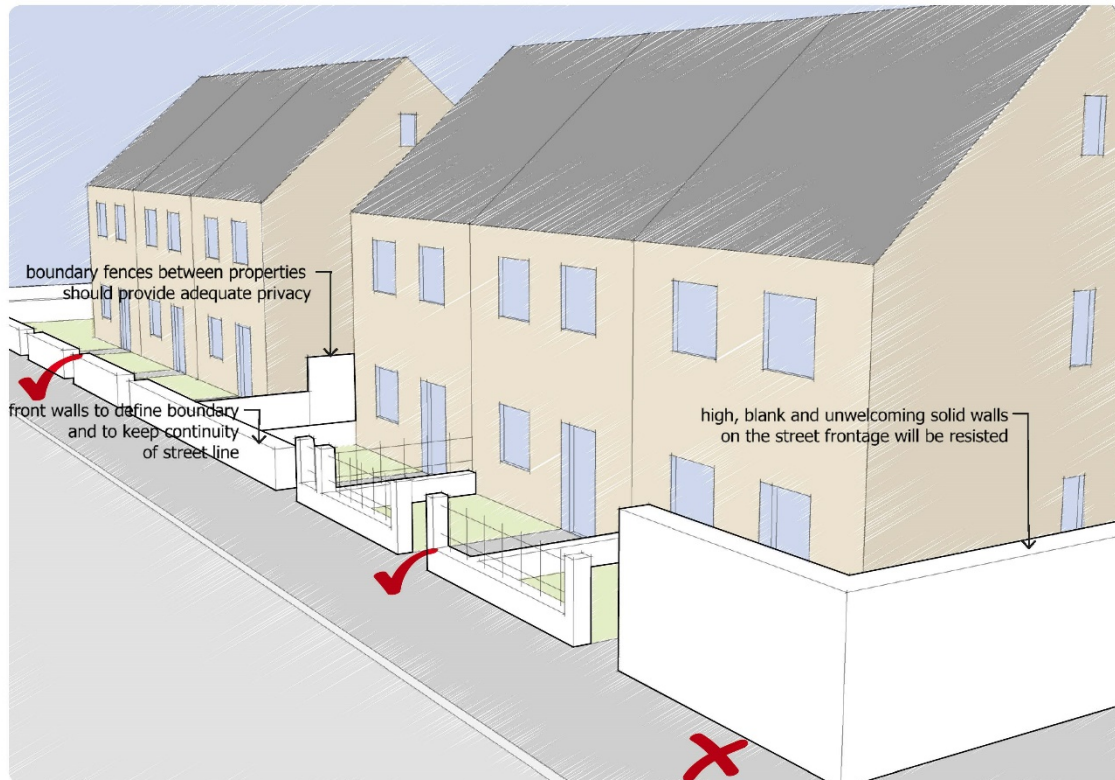


Figure 11: Boundary walls and fences

62. In residential streets the erection of front walls or other means of enclosure will be carefully considered to ensure it is not too high and relates well to the surrounding area. A previous planning condition or covenant may also have a restriction on front enclosures.
63. Walls or fences over 1m in height at the front of a property or at the side where the property is a corner plot may reduce natural surveillance and are likely to be resisted.

Highway safety

64. The height and positioning of walls or fences should not impinge on highway safety and particular care should be taken at junctions and bends in the highway. Walls or fences which restrict visibility for road users will be unacceptable. Details of specific requirements can be found in Highways Standing Advice, available from the relevant Highways Authority.

Impact on neighbours

65. Fences and walls should be designed and located so that they do not unreasonably restrict light entering a neighbouring property or have an unacceptable effect on outlook.

Off-road parking considerations

66. Provision for off-road car parking should be carried out in a sensitive way so as not to detract from the character of the area or reduce highway or pedestrian safety. It should also not lead to any substantial reduction in existing on-street provision where it is in limited supply.
67. In certain urban areas only, it is sometimes preferable to provide open fronted parking areas so as to encourage their use for vehicle parking as is their intended purpose and a justification will be required from the applicant if open fronted parking areas are not included. However, in high density urban areas, such as city, town or neighbourhood centres, or in strategically important and prominent locations, such as along the waterfront and in historic streets and Conservation Areas, open fronted parking areas may have a negative impact on the attractiveness of the street and could be resisted. Similarly, ground floor car parking that generates blank or unattractive street-facing building elevations in such locations will be resisted.
68. In more rural areas, car ports and garages should try and reflect the style of more traditional outbuildings in the countryside. This would include pitched roofs, rather than flat roofs, careful consideration of placement within the site, and use of appropriate materials, particularly if the site has a historic agricultural character.

Garages and car ports

Garages vs car ports

69. As garages are normally used as storage and not for parking, the LPAs may encourage the use of car ports as an alternative.

Highway safety

70. When determining planning applications, safety for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles is paramount and obstruction should not be caused to the highway. For example, garage doors should not project over a pavement or road either during opening or when open.
71. Off-road car parking should be designed so that cars do not overhang the highway, for example when a car is parked prior to a garage being opened. To overcome this, when a driveway is in front of a garage, it should be a minimum of 5.5m long. Where a driveway is used by pedestrians to gain access to a property, it should be at least 3.2m wide.
72. To enable easy manoeuvring in and out of a garage or car parking area entrances should be designed so that a vehicle can enter or exit in a single turning movement. Where the entrance is on to a classified road then there should be room within the site for the vehicle to enter and exit the public highway in a forward gear.

Impact on neighbours

73. The construction of an off-street parking area should not negatively affect occupants of neighbouring properties. Proposals which are likely to create a disturbance in a residential area will be refused permission.
74. For garages, particular attention needs to be paid to the impact on neighbour's outlook and light, guidance is available above.

Visual amenity/street-scene

75. The design of a garage, whether attached to the property or freestanding, should relate well in scale and proportion to the original dwelling and to the surrounding area. Attention should be paid to the design of all parts of the structure including doors, walls and roofs. Where a garage is attached to a house it is usually preferable to set it back from the front of the property:

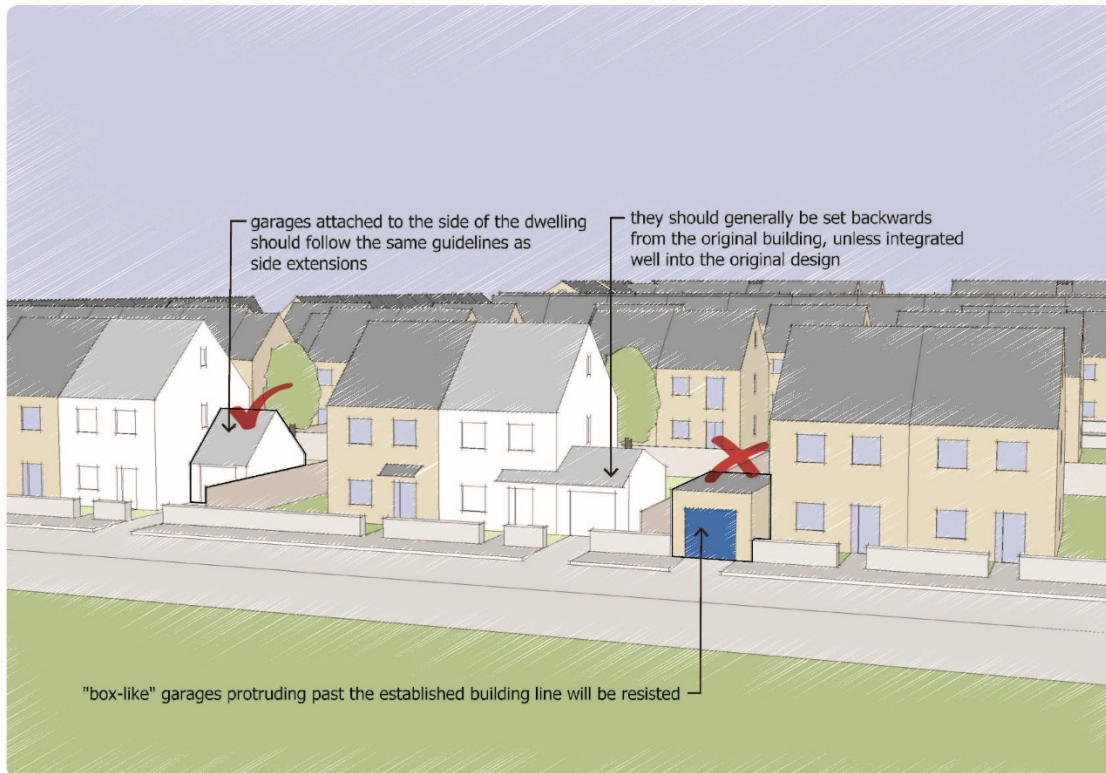


Figure 12: Garages

76. In urban areas, garages in front gardens will generally be resisted as these are prominent sites and can detract from the street-scene. In exceptional circumstances, garages in sloping front gardens may be allowed if the majority of the garage can be built into the garden. Garage doors should not open over the public highway to ensure there is no obstruction.

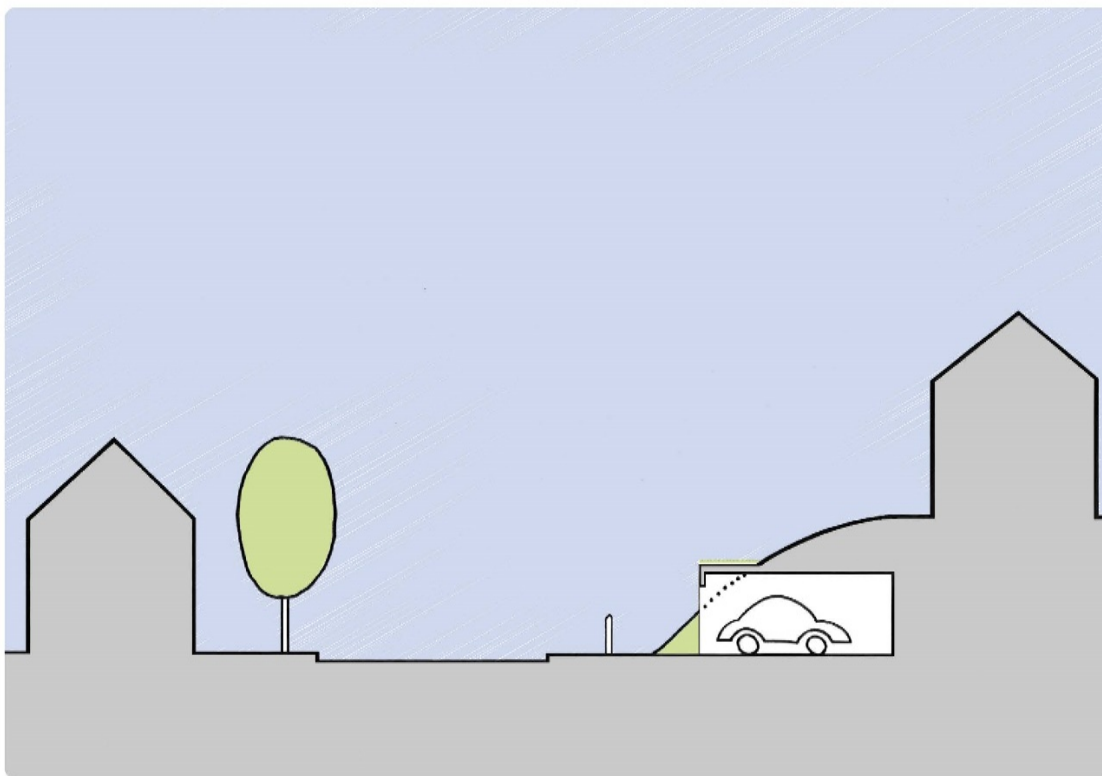


Figure 13: Garages in sloping front garden

Hard standings

77. It has become popular to pave over front gardens to provide parking space. Although this may be a convenient way of providing off-street parking, proposals need to be considered carefully to ensure there is no negative impact on residential amenity, safety, and environmental grounds as well as the character and attractiveness of the street. In many Conservation Areas, historic towns, villages and rural areas new hardstandings may be unacceptable due to the adverse impact on the character of the street scene.
78. In assessing proposals, the LPAs will have regard to the impact of the proposal on the street scene, highway safety and drainage.
79. When designing a hard standing the following guidelines should be adhered to:
- Retain as much original walling, fencing or railings as practical to ensure the appearance of enclosure is preserved. Full frontage crossings will not generally be permitted;
 - Incorporate sufficient space for soft landscaping to screen cars and minimise the visual impact of the hard surfaced area; and,
 - The hard standing should be constructed of permeable material so that water can soak into the surrounding ground. If it is intended to construct a hard standing using gravel, a 1m tarmac or concrete apron is required adjacent to the public highway to prevent gravel coming onto the highway;

- The proposed hard standing should not drain onto the public highway. If the hard standing slopes/drains towards the highway, a channel should be installed to prevent run off onto the highway.

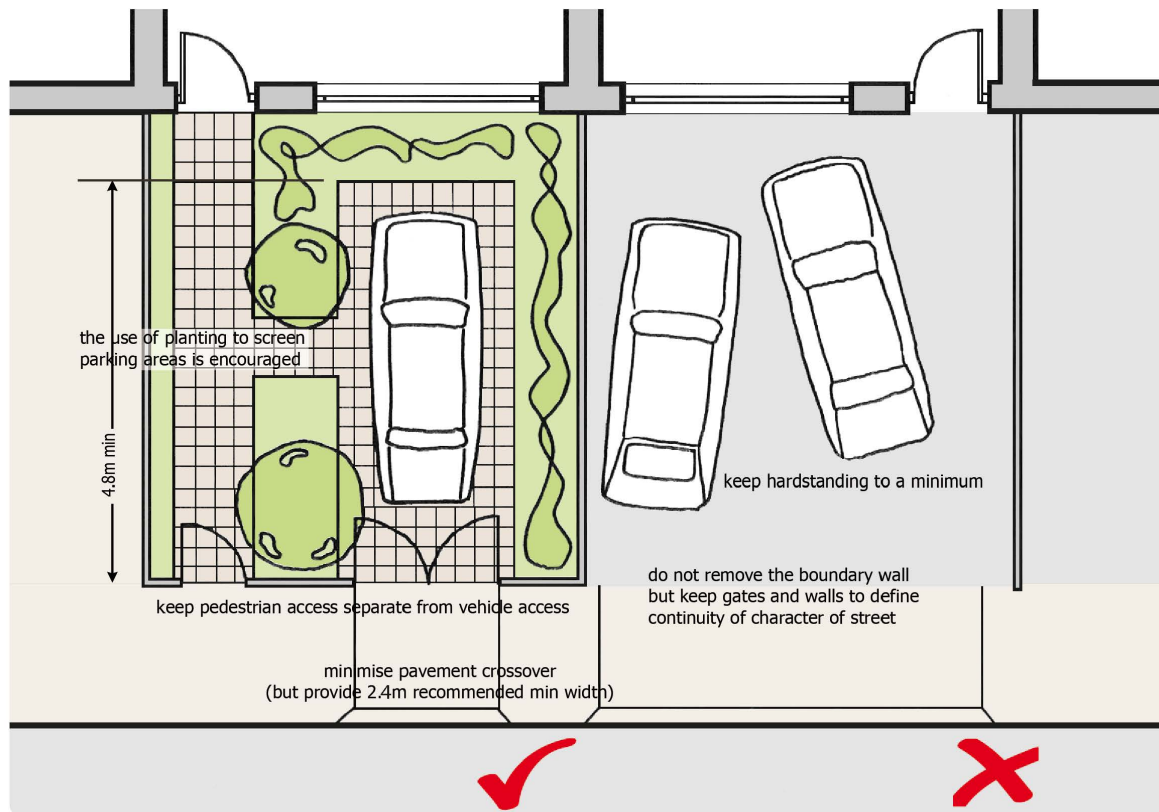


Figure 14: Hard standings

80. Further guidance on how to pave a front garden in a sustainable way is available on the [Planning Portal](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/)⁴ and in government guidance: [Permeable surfacing of front gardens: guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/permeable-surfacing-of-front-gardens-guidance)⁵.

Parking to the rear of a property

81. The LPAs will resist any planning applications which proposes the total removal of rear boundary walls and/or opening up of rear curtilages to accommodate off-street parking where this would be prejudicial to security and visual amenity.

Dropped kerbs (Domestic Vehicle Crossings)

82. Driving a vehicle over a verge or footpath to access a property, without an appropriate vehicle crossing or without lawful authority from the LHA, is an offence under Section 184 of the Highways Act 1980 and may result in prosecution.

⁴<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/>

⁵<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/permeable-surfacing-of-front-gardens-guidance>

83. Agreement from the local highways authority (LHA) is needed before you do anything on the highway. This consent procedure is separate from obtaining planning permission and the highway service applies its own guidelines in respect of the width and separation of pavement crossover points:
- [Plymouth City Council](#)⁶
 - [Devon County Council \(South Hams and West Devon\)](#)⁷
84. To find out whether planning permission is needed for a dropped kerb, please contact the relevant LPA.
85. If planning permission for a new access onto a highway has been granted planning approval through the submission and determination of a planning application then permission to drop the kerbs and lower the footway has been accepted in-principle.
86. The following guidance has been adapted from the highway service guidelines.
87. The standard recommendation for any access onto a classified road is that the turning provision for a car should be provided within a private property. The vehicle should be able to enter and leave the property in a forward gear.
88. However, depending on the nature of the classified road (onto which access would be obtained), in terms of the volume and speed of traffic travelling along it, a new access without on-site turning provision may be acceptable to the LPA and each case will be considered on its' own merit.
89. When applying for planning permission the following guidelines should be adhered to:
- A property is only allowed to have one functioning domestic vehicle crossing, except in extenuating circumstances and applications to provide more than 1 crossing shall be considered on a case-by-case basis;
 - Vehicles are not permitted to park on the crossing;
 - Applications should provide sufficient room on the property to prevent a vehicle from protruding onto the footway/verge when parked. The minimum parking standards are 2.4m by 4.8m and the minimum crossing width shall be 2.7m (3 kerb lengths);
 - A vehicle should be able to cross the footway/verge at right angles (90 degrees) to the road;

⁶<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/roadsandpavements/droppedkerbs>

⁷<https://new.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/make-a-request/vehicle-crossing-or-dropped-kerb/>

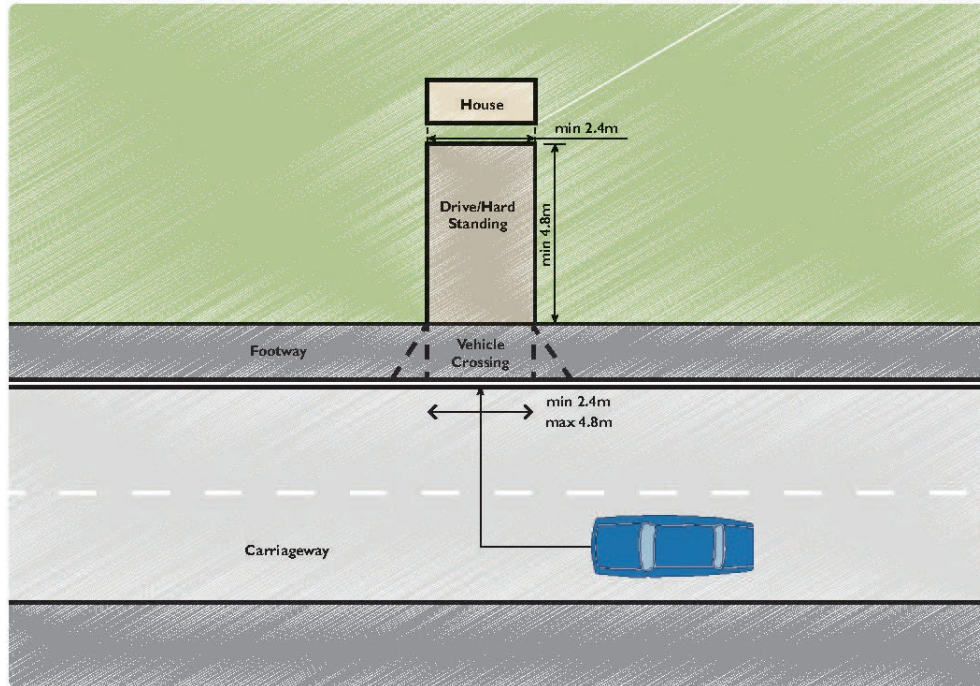


Figure 15: Individual crossing

- Any gates accessing the property are not permitted to open outwards onto the highway;
- If the proposed crossing is within 10m (or 15m on a classified road) of a junction or roundabout then the application will likely be refused;
 - The proposed channel should be connected to the resident's private drainage system/soak away;
 - Driver and pedestrian visibility should not be impeded by any of the following:
 - Walls, fences, or hedges along the frontage of the property or the neighbouring properties;
 - Street furniture or trees in the highway; and,
 - Vehicles parked on the highway.
 - If any of the above are blocking access to the crossing or visibility they may need to be moved or removed any may incur an increased cost, in cases where these cannot be moved the application will likely be refused.
 - If an inspection cover or telephone pole is present then, should planning permission or LHA agreement be secured then the application will need to arrange with the utility companies for these to be moved/lowered;
 - It will not be possible to construct a vehicle crossing where a BT or similar communications chamber is present. The levels of these covers cannot be changed;
 - If any of the following is present in the area of the proposed crossing the application will likely be refused:

- Pedestrian crossing;
- Disabled bays
- Residents parking zones; and/or,
- Pay and Display.
- Where two adjoining properties share an existing driveway or crossing or an application wishes to construct a new crossing to serve two properties:
 - A crossing covering the whole frontage of both properties will not be allowed.
 - The maximum overall width for the shared crossing will be 5.6m.

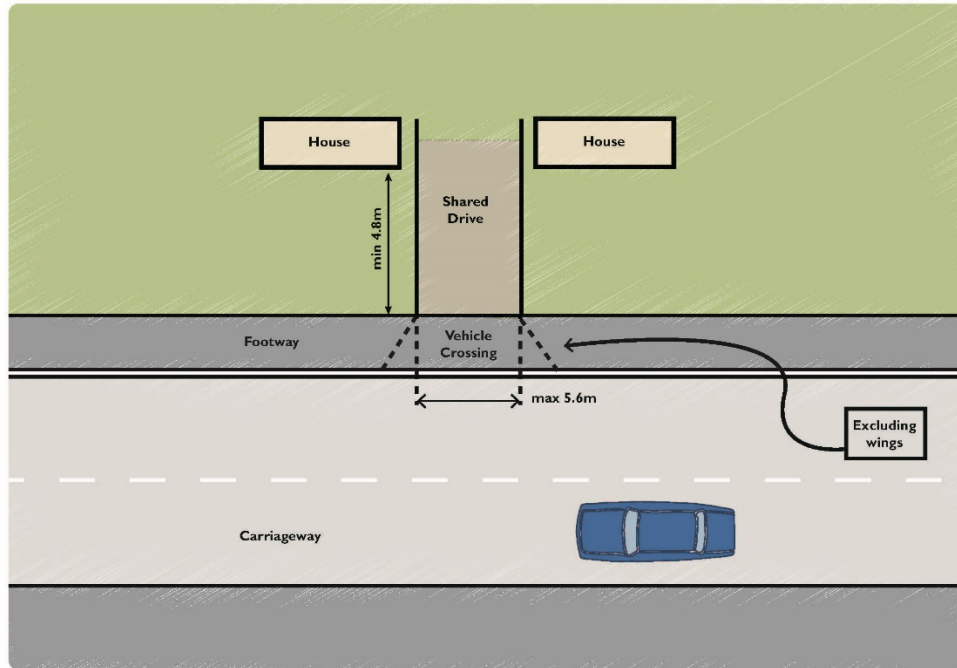


Figure 16: Shared crossing

- If there are neighbouring crossings, an additional dropped crossing will only be granted if there is a minimum of 6m distance between any existing access and the proposed crossing in order to preserve existing on-street kerbside car parking. However this will be subject to review and considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Existing crossings/drives, junctions and service lanes are all considered accesses.

90. For further guidance on transport and infrastructure please see Section 8.