

Car Parking at West End Offices and in Conservation Areas Design Guidance



INTRODUCTION

Large parts of Aberdeen, mainly to the south and west of the city centre, have been designated as conservation areas in order to protect, and where possible, enhance their architectural character and environmental amenity.

The typical layout of most of these areas consists of broad, often tree lined, streets, occasionally having service roads and gardens between the street and the buildings. The buildings may vary in size and style, but generally they have small front gardens and to the rear, long walled gardens, frequently accessed from a rear lane running parallel to the street.

THE ISSUE

The increasing demand for off street parking brought about by ever expanding car ownership, and the introduction of traffic management schemes, generates pressure for car parking in garden areas, both to the front and rear of commercial and residential properties in conservation areas bordering the city centre.

POLICY

The Aberdeen Local Plan, "Green Spaces New Places" states in Policy 8: Design and Policy Guidance", that all development is expected to conform, where appropriate, to the Council's published supplementary guidance. Included within the section on Area Guidance is "Design Guidance for Car Parking in the West End".

STATUTORY AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

In conservation areas, planning permission is required to form a car park within a front or rear garden. In some situations, conservation area consent may also be required where the proposals entail demolition work. Outwith conservation areas, planning permission is required to form car parking areas within the curtilage of flatted properties and non-residential premises, where access is taken off a trunk or other classified road, or across a public open space* (this does not apply to a narrow grass verge), or where engineering operations are involved (e.g. where excavation or upfilling of more than 0.5 metres is required). Planning permission is also required to form a car park within the curtilage of a listed building, whilst listed building consent is required if any structure within the curtilage of a listed building is to be altered or removed. In all cases, including those where no planning or listed building consents are required, there is a requirement to apply to the Council to form a footpath crossing.

Note: *There are restrictions on driveways that cross roadside verges or other green spaces over a certain width. Additional information on this matter can be obtained in Policy 66: "Vehicular Access to Development" of the Aberdeen Local Plan.

STATUTORY PROTECTION OF TREES

Trees in conservation areas are statutorily protected, and their removal without or before express consent from the Council constitutes an offence, as does the removal of any tree that is protected by a tree preservation order. Consent is also required before any work, such as lopping or thinning, is carried out to a protected tree.

REMOVAL OF EXISTING PARKING SPACES

Whilst generally the pressure from property owners is to create additional car parking space, there may be an occasion when an owner will wish to convert existing parking space back to landscaping. To help restore the character of an area, residents will be encouraged to restore private car parking in the West End back to its original use as garden space. The proviso to this is that the planning authority must be satisfied that any loss of off-street parking will not have a detrimental effect on road safety.

PARKING IN FRONT GARDENS

Previously the problem tended to be found at its most extreme when dwelling houses were converted for commercial use, creating pressure for most of the garden ground, both front and rear, to be given over for parking. More recently, and almost as damaging, is the cumulative effect of accommodating one or more cars in small residential front gardens, which can rapidly lead to the erosion of the character and amenity of residential streets. This problem has been investigated at some length, and was the subject of wide public consultation. Following that consultation, the Council decided that it should maintain its presumption against allowing front garden parking where rear garden parking is an option, where there is a road safety issue, where significant street or garden trees will be affected and where on-street parking is readily available in the vicinity. Other situations will be considered on their own merit, but with the provision that the garden will have to be large enough to take a single car whilst leaving a reasonable space between the parked car and the house, and at least 50% of the garden ground for soft landscaping. These and other requirements are described in greater detail in Appendices 1 and 2 of a report to the Planning Committee of May 2001.

LOCK-UP GARAGES IN REAR GARDENS

The formation of lock-up garages off rear lanes, serving houses or a small number of flats, can usually be achieved satisfactorily. The design and positioning of the garage should be given careful consideration, particularly with regard to the effect the garage will have on the appearance of the lane. Where, as in most situations, the garage opens onto the lane, the outer wall of the garage should be on the same line as the garden wall, and not recessed back from it, as this helps to maintain the delineation of the lane. This may affect the choice of garage door as it is not acceptable for the door to encroach onto the lane as it is opened.

The formation of ranks of garages in the rear gardens of tenements has an extremely detrimental effect on the appearance of rear garden areas, and will not normally be permitted. They occupy more garden ground than simple parking spaces. They also protrude above garden walls and cannot easily be screened by trees or other landscaping measures. It is virtually impossible to recreate any sense of enclosure in these situations, and the turning space in front of the garages tend to become desolate areas which attract vandalism. Additionally the formation of banks of garages can greatly increase the built footprint of the feu to the extent that it could push it over the 33% maximum area which is generally considered permissible to be developed.

PARKING LAYOUT IN REAR GARDENS

Where car parks in rear areas are permissible, their layout will vary depending on the site characteristics and parking requirements. A high priority is placed on retaining significant trees, original outbuildings such as stables or coach houses, boundary features such as granite walling and even changes in level which add interest to the site. An example of a car parking layout for a typical tenement is illustrated on page 3, although others may be appropriate.

Parking bays should be 5.0 metres by 2.5 metres, and access aisles around 6.0 metres wide. Adequate space should be allowed to permit turning entirely within the site. A generous space of around 5.0 metres should be allowed between the parking area and the rear lane to permit adequate landscaping, and for trees to develop without threatening boundary walls.



SURFACING OF PARKING AREAS

An area of granite setts or other similar finish is required at the entrance to the car park, to provide an identifiable boundary between the lane and the car park and to retain any loose materials which may be used to surface the car park. The parking surface may be constructed in a variety of durable materials such as block pavers, tarmac or gravel. Water bound materials such as clay and sand based hoggin or granite dust are temporary measures which are not acceptable. Where the surface of the parking area is to be gravel, the length of granite setts or similar material at the entrance to the car park must be at least 2 metres, to prevent gravel being dragged onto the public road or lane.

REAR BOUNDARY WALLS

Boundary walls are generally around two metres high, built of granite pinnings or granite rubble, usually left exposed but occasionally harled. They will normally have a granite or red brick-on-edge coping. Openings formed in rear boundary walls should be of a width of around 3.5 metres to allow vehicular access. A length of boundary wall on each side of the opening will likely have to be reduced in height to permit visibility in each direction for parking areas serving commercial premises or more than a single residential unit. Beyond this the wall must step back up to its original height, to provide a degree of screening of the car park. Materials matching the original should be used in any alterations to boundary walls.

COMMON TYPES OF COPE



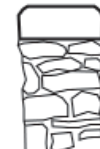
rectangular granite cope



John Gunn granite cope



brick on edge cope



bullnose brick on edge cope

GATES

Close-boarded timber pedestrian pass gates, or vehicular gates to a single residential unit, either stained or painted and constructed to the same height as the boundary wall, are a common feature of these lanes, and provide reasonable security and privacy. Cast and wrought iron or mild steel gates can be used at entrances to commercial premises or flatted developments, and can be effectively employed in conjunction with railings on top of an adjacent lowered wall. Ornate scrollwork is however, alien to Aberdeen's special architectural character, particularly in the context of rear or service lanes, and ought to be avoided. Gates must always open into the garden rather than into the lane.

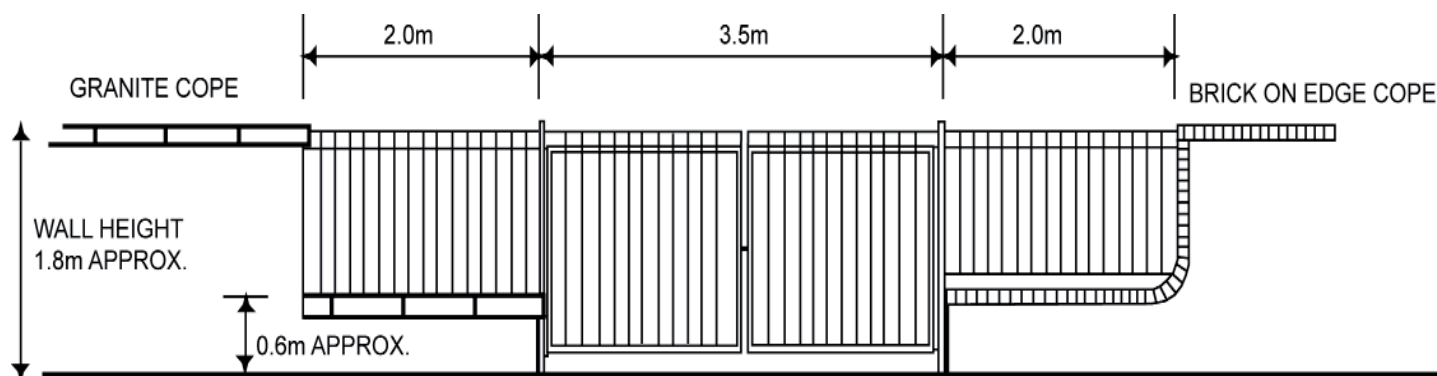
TREES AND LANDSCAPING IN REAR GARDENS

Where rear garden ground is to be given over for car parking there will be an inevitable loss of amenity space, or potential amenity space where the ground in question has been neglected. This type of space is of great importance for visual stimulation, wildlife, air quality, sustainable drainage, and practical and leisure uses such as clothes drying or simply gardening and sitting outdoors. The area given over for parking should therefore, be kept to an absolute minimum. In order that garden ground remains the dominant feature of the garden it is suggested that no more than 45%-50% be given over for parking and other areas of hard surfacing, although these percentages may increase slightly in flatted situations to allow one parking space per flat. Where consent is given for the formation of parking area in garden ground, it will be a condition of that consent, that the remainder of the garden will be landscaped in accordance with an approved scheme. It is a normal requirement

of such conditions that the landscaping be maintained for a period of five years following the implementation of the landscaping.

The Council has a statutory duty to have regard to the preservation of existing trees and to require the planting of new trees in appropriate circumstances. In that respect it should be noted that trees within conservation areas are statutorily protected, and that it is an offence to remove a protected tree before express consent has been granted by the Council. A tree survey is required if there are any trees over 75mm in diameter at chest height. Existing trees contribute greatly to the attractiveness and character of a locality, and must be retained and protected from any damaging construction activities. An area no less than half the tree height or canopy spread, whichever is the greater, (British Standard 5837; Trees in Relation to Construction), must be kept free of any disturbance such as changes in ground levels, excavation and compaction. Where there is insufficient space to comply with the British Standard, encroachment into the protected area will be permissible only if it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the planning authority, that the proposal can be carried out in a manner which will not cause damage to the trees, or detrimentally affect their setting.

The council will normally require the planting of new trees as part of proposals for the landscaping of parking areas. Such trees can be particularly effective when planted just inside the feu, near the rear lane. The species of tree chosen should be the largest type suitable for the particular site, as these will tend to produce the greatest impact and environmental benefits. Native species of trees should be used where suitable.



Alternative methods of finishing lowered walls at rear parking areas

SUMMARIES OF APPENDICES 1 AND 2 IN REPORT TO PLANNING COMMITTEE OF 22 MAY 2001

APPENDIX 1, ROAD SAFETY IN RELATION TO FRONT DRIVEWAYS

All applications to form a driveway must be assessed against road safety standards to ensure they do not present hazards to other road users or pedestrians. Every new access causes an increase in right turning traffic and may result in vehicles reversing onto or off the road. Both manoeuvres can restrict road efficiency and create potential hazards.

DEFINITIONS OF ROAD TYPES

A **Classified Road** is a highway which has been identified as being of importance for the movement of traffic. Classifications given are Class A, B or C, and any new access onto a classified road requires planning permission. **Primary Distributor Roads** form the primary network for the urban area and comprise trunk roads and important classified roads. All **Trunk Roads** are Class A. **District Distributor Roads** may be class A, B or C whilst **Local Distributor Roads** may be Class B or C, but are generally unclassified. Trunk Roads and Primary Routes are shown in the Finalised Aberdeen Local Plan in the Additional City Wide Proposals maps.

ACCESS ONTO CLASSIFIED ROADS

There is a presumption against granting planning permission for a driveway onto a trunk road or primary distributor road. On district distributor roads there is also a presumption against granting consent for driveways, but this may be relaxed provided the proposal meets road safety criteria, and vehicles are able to enter and exit the parking area in forward gear. Local distributor roads are treated similarly to district distributors but without the requirement to enter and exit in forward gear.

MISCELLANEOUS REQUIREMENTS

VISIBILITY

Driveways must be positioned to allow adequate visibility, particularly on busy pedestrian routes, in accordance with national standards.

PROXIMITY TO ROAD JUNCTIONS

Driveways will not normally be closer to a junction than 15 metres, although this may be relaxed if the road is lightly trafficked.

FOOTPATH CROSSINGS

No more than one footpath crossing per property will be permitted, except in situations where a large house may have a long frontage when an 'in' and 'out' may be acceptable.

DRIVEWAYS

Driveways must be at least 5.0 metres in length, and new houses must have a driveway of at least 6.0 metres. Where, however, a driveway is more than 7.0 metres long, it must be at least 10.0 metres in length to prevent the possibility of two cars being parked, with the second car overhanging the footpath. The gradient of the driveway must not normally exceed 1:20, although 1:15 may be acceptable in some circumstances, depending on the surface texture employed. The first two metres of the driveway adjacent to the footpath must not be surfaced with loose material such as gravel, to prevent material being carried onto the footpath or roadway. The driveway must be drained internally, with no surface water discharging onto the roadway. A driveway might not be permitted if it is accessed from a 'Pay and Display Area', or via a parking lay-by, where the lay-by is regularly occupied.

APPENDIX 2, PLANNING CRITERIA IN RELATION TO PARKING IN FRONT GARDENS

Planning criteria considered when assessing whether consent may be granted for parking in front gardens of listed buildings or buildings in conservation areas. Similar criteria apply to front gardens of flats.

GENERAL CRITERIA

1. No more than 35% of the front garden area may be given over for the combined parking area, driveway and any turning area, or 50% if footpaths and other hard surfaced areas are included. At least 50% of the garden area should be left in topsoil to permit soft landscaping.
2. Where the property originally had cast iron railings, their reinstatement will be encouraged to lessen the impact of parked cars, failing which some other form of enclosure will be required, or appropriate soft landscaping.
3. The formation of the access driveway or parking area must not result in the loss of any street trees or significant garden trees.
4. Consent will not be granted where the property has a rear garden area, suitable for parking, which is accessible from a rear lane or side street.
5. Where the garden is owned by more than one resident, owners will not be permitted a separate driveway and parking area each unless they can be achieved without fragmenting the garden or unduly reducing on-street parking. A communal driveway and parking area may be permissible provided they occupy no more than 35% of the front garden, or 50% if footpaths and other hard surfaced areas are included.
6. Where the building is in multiple ownership, the formation of an access driveway for one or more owners should not result in any of the remaining owners having no opportunity to park in the street adjacent to their property.
7. Consent will not normally be granted for parking in garden areas in front of tenement flats.

SITUATIONS WHERE CLASSIFICATION OF ROAD AND LOCATION OF DRIVEWAY PERMITS REVERSING OUT FROM THE PARKING AREA

1. The parking area should be no closer to the front wall of the property than 1.0 metre.
2. The driveway must be no wider than 3.0 metres, or 3.5 metres if combined with the footpath.

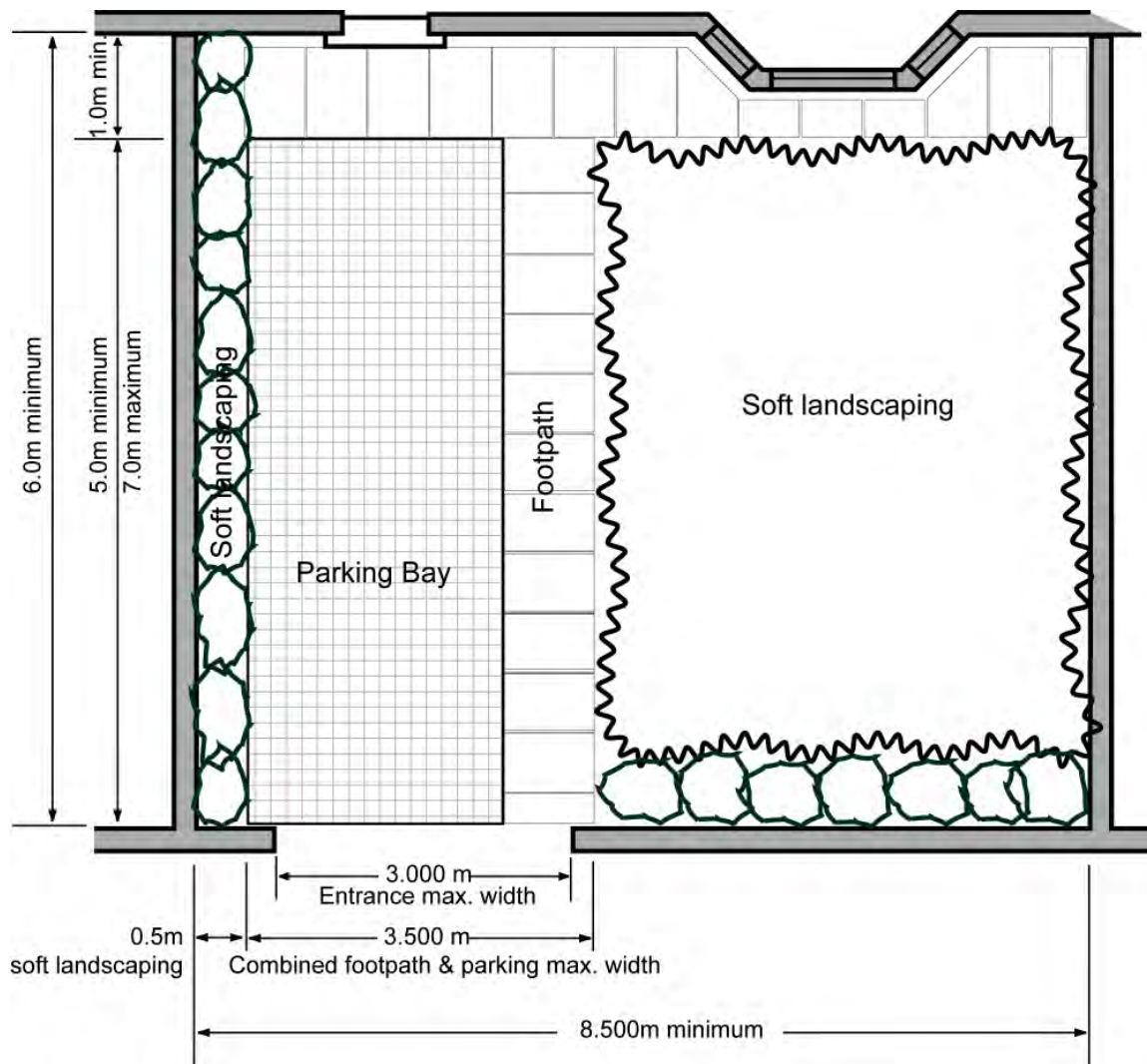
SITUATIONS WHERE CLASSIFICATION OF ROAD PERMITS GARDEN PARKING PROVIDED IT CAN BE ENTERED AND EXITED IN FORWARD GEAR

1. The parking and turning areas should be no closer to the front wall of the property than 1.0 metre.
2. The design of any turning area should be such that it can be used only for turning and not as additional parking area.
3. Suitable landscaping should be provided to screen both parking and turning areas, and generally to soften the intrusive effect of cars parked in front of the property.

NOTE

Aspects of road safety and planning criteria in both appendices must be considered together. Consent will not be obtained by largely satisfying one set set of criteria whilst ignoring the other unless extenuating circumstances apply. A possible extenuating situation might for example be where access for the disabled is involved.

This leaflet can only give you some brief guidance. We are always willing to discuss with you any specific proposals you may have. Before you visit, you are advised to make an appointment so that you can be sure that the relevant member of staff will be available.



Sketch layout of smallest front garden capable of accepting a single car parking space whilst retaining 50% garden ground for soft landscaping.

Total area + 51m² approx

Total area of landscaping = 25m² approx

If you require any further information please contact:

**Masterplanning, Design and Conservation
Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
Aberdeen City Council
Business Hub 4
Marischal College
Broad Street
Aberdeen AB10 1AB**

Telephone: 01224 522155

Fax: 01224 523180

E-Mail: pi@aberdeencity.gov.uk