

# STATUS OF SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE ON **RESIDENTIAL BOUNDARY TREATMENT**

## **Status**

This Planning Guidance, which is supplementary to Policy BE1 of the Woking Borough Local Plan 1999, has been formally adopted by Woking Borough Council. In this respect the Supplementary Guidance has the status of a material consideration in the determination of planning applications by this Authority and in its defence of its decisions at appeal.

## **Statement of Public Consultation**

In accordance with the advice set out in Annex A (A3) of Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 (PPG1) on General Policy and Principles, the Supplementary Guidance has been the subject of wide public consultation with a total of 94 consultees, as follows:

i) Professional Practitioners

All developers and professional practitioners who had submitted planning applications for at least one residential dwelling during the previous two years, together with the House Builders Federation, which number 60 in total.

ii) Local Resident's and Amenity Groups

The Byfleet Parish Council and all resident's and amenity groups within the Borough which are known to the Council, together with the Surrey Police, which number 34 in total.

The period of public consultation allowed over 6 weeks for the above individuals and organisations to make comments on the Draft Supplementary Guidance. Altogether eight responses were received. After careful consideration of these representations the Guidance was amended to address the valid points of concern. These amendments were considered at the Council's Executive Committee on 27 July 2000, when the Guidance was formally adopted. Full details of the representations made to the Council, together with the Council's response can be obtained on request by contacting 01483 743443.

**SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE**  
**RESIDENTIAL BOUNDARY TREATMENTS**  
(Adopted July 2000)

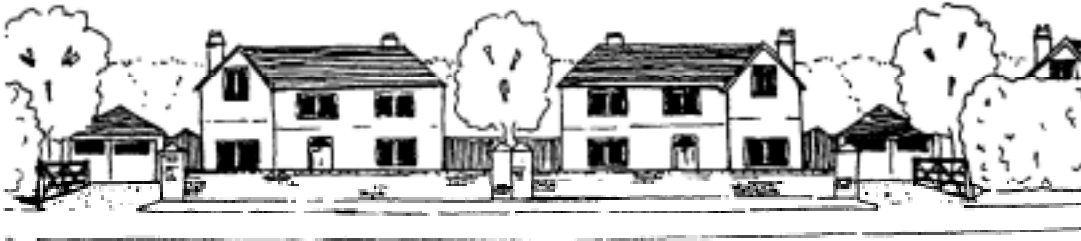
**1.0 INTRODUCTION AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 This document sets out Supplementary Planning Guidance on the suitability of using different types of boundary treatment within Woking Borough.
- 1.2 **The guidance is supplementary to Policy BE1 in the Woking Borough Local Plan** and should be considered by residents and developers before submitting planning applications for new housing developments or residential developments which involve a change to the existing boundary (The Policy is set out in Appendix 1). Section 2 of the Guidance sets out the types of boundary treatment which the Council will normally permit when determining planning applications within the different residential areas found in the Borough, and those likely to be refused permission. Appendix 2 sets out when planning permission is required for the erection and demolition of boundary treatments. In general, planning permission is not required for boundaries which are less than 1.0m high, or for the planting of a hedge unless there is a landscaping condition attached to the planning consent. Appendix 3 gives details of the dimensions, materials and plant species which are recommended.
- 1.3 The Guidance is specifically concerned with the boundaries which separate the private space of individual properties and the public realm of the street. The Council recognises the importance of both the appearance of the boundary and its impact on the character of a street scene, together with the need to provide a secure boundary for residential properties. As such, the document seeks to give guidance on the most suitable methods of providing secure boundaries whilst maintaining the character. The guidance will be applied flexibly having regard to the circumstances and other material considerations of each case.

**2.0 IMPACT OF DIFFERENT BOUNDARY TYPES ON THE CHARACTER OF THE STREET SCENE**

**General Comments**

- 2.1 The character of different residential areas and the types of boundary treatment found in Woking varies widely.
- 2.2 The different type of boundary treatments prevalent in the area often dominate the character and appearance, and are the main features, of the street scene.
- 2.3 In order to ensure that the character of an area is maintained and not eroded by incongruous features in the street scene, it is important that the most appropriate type of boundary treatment is used.
- 2.4 The type of boundary treatment chosen should always reinforce the existing character of the area and follow what is the predominant boundary type in that locality, and should always be located on the owners land, with the planting set back a sufficient distance to ensure mature growth is within the owners boundary, and to minimise the possibility of vegetation obstructing the highway (see figure 1 following).



*Figure 1: The type of boundary treatment has a significant impact on the street scene.*

- 2.5 There are four residential areas discussed in this Guidance; the Green Belt, Urban Areas of Special Residential Character (UASRC), Urban and Town Centre locations, and Open Plan developments.

**Green Belt**

- 2.6 The predominant boundary types found in the Green Belt include mature trees, hedges, and ditches. These are informally laid out, often create views and give a more open character whilst providing an attractive soft boundary.
- 2.7 The construction of fences, walls or gate piers, is likely to detract from the natural and open character of the Green Belt, blocking the views and creating a sense of enclosure more reminiscent of an urban area. Where such a boundary is necessary for security purposes the Council will only grant planning consent if it is set back from the boundary with hedge planting in front. Alternatively, the more open post and rail fencing may be acceptable as it can also maintain the natural and open character (see figure 2 below).

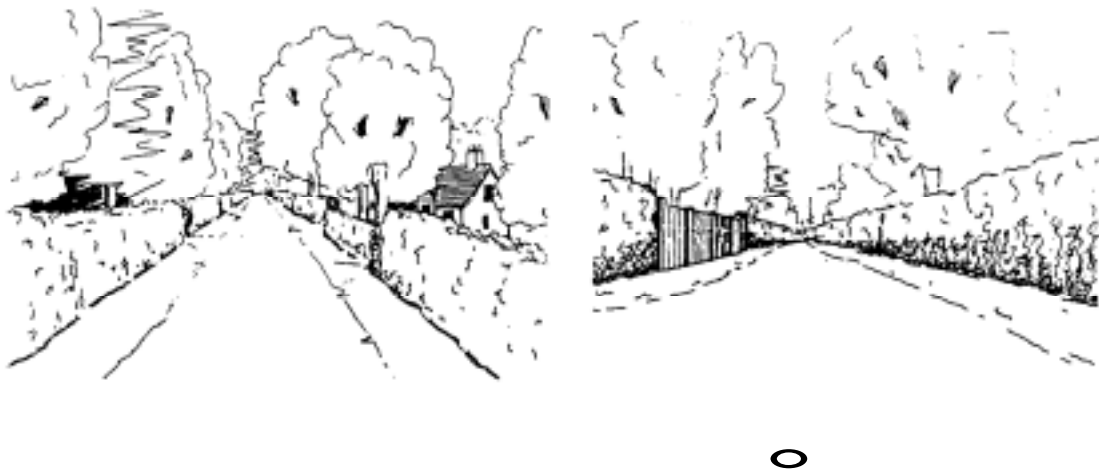


*Figure 2: The introduction of walls and fences will change the natural and open character of the Green Belt and create a more urban appearance. Planting will be required in front of them where they are granted planning permission.*

- 2.8 Exceptionally, when planning permission is granted for residential development within the Green Belt, the Council may require the informal planting of hedges and trees along the boundary, so that the natural and open character of the Green Belt is protected.

### **Urban Areas of Special Residential Character (UASRC).**

- 2.9 In many of the designated UASRC the landscaped setting completely dominates the buildings and other structures. Examples include Old Avenue in West Byfleet, The Hockering Estate in Maybury, and Hook Heath in St.Johns.
- 2.10 The predominant boundary types found in these areas are mature trees and hedges, which have a more formal layout and manicured appearance, often with grass verges between the road and the boundary, and give the appearance of a parkland or woodland glade setting. Occasionally, fencing has been erected for security purposes, behind the formal hedge or tree boundary.
- 2.11 Where a development is granted planning consent, the Council may require the formal planting of hedges and trees along the boundaries where this is part of the established character, in order to maintain the uniform landscaped character. Where a soft verge and ditch exist in the immediate area, the Council will also seek the continuation of these elements of the street scene.
- 2.12 In UASRC, the inclusion of close boarded fencing, walls, gate piers, or railings is likely to have a negative impact on the formal soft landscaped setting by creating a more urban, hard landscaped appearance, inappropriate in these locations, and will not normally be granted planning permission. However, where such a boundary is necessary for security purposes, the Council may allow the erection of wooden fencing or metal railings, but this must be screened by suitable, uniform hedge or tree planting (see figure 3 below).



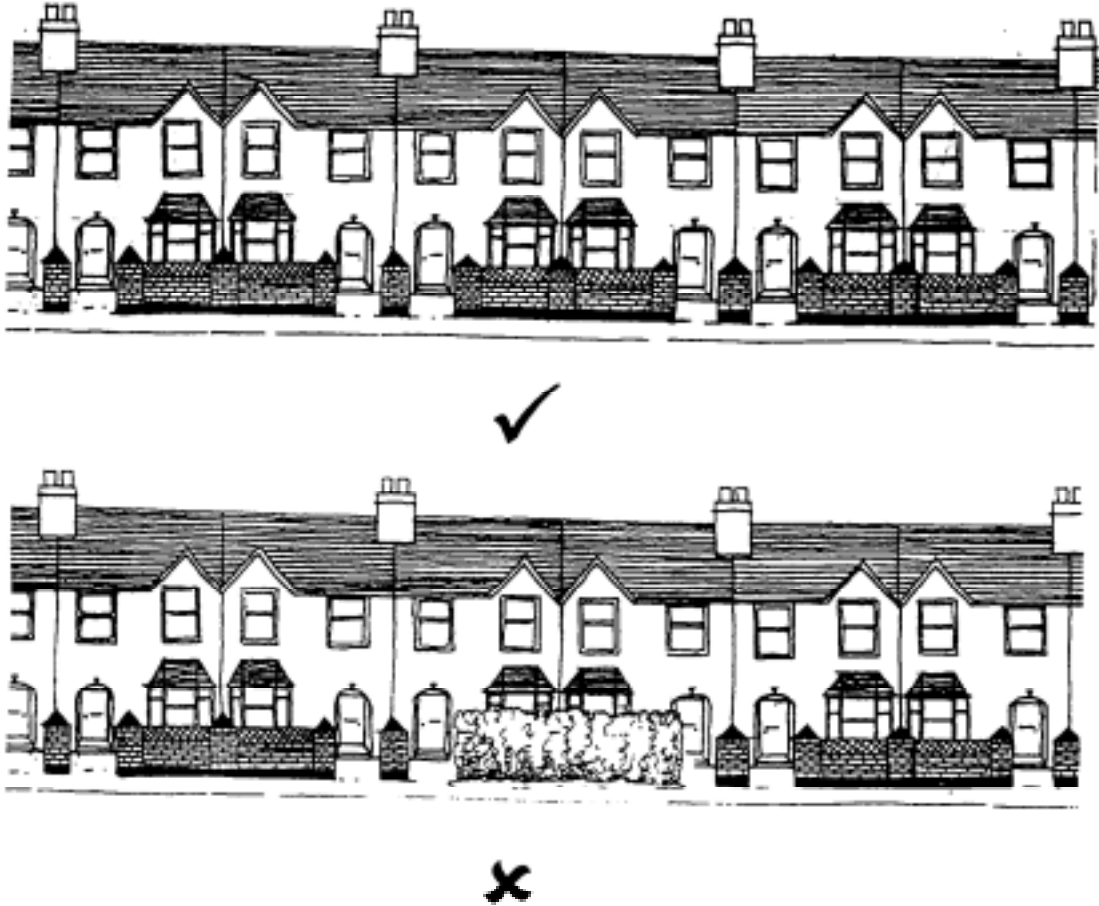
*Figure 3: The introduction of a fence or wall can erode the UASRC setting of the street scene. Planting will be required in front of such a structure when granted planning permission.*

### **Urban and Town Centre Locations**

- 2.13 In the town centre and other urban locations, the main boundary types are usually fences, walls and railings, usually less than 1.0m in height, with little or no greenery. It is more common at these locations to have a mixture of boundary types where there is no distinct character to the street scene. If there is any greenery in these locations it is usually low hedges or smaller shrubs, secondary to the dominant boundary type and located in small front gardens, for example Walton Road in Maybury. In other locations, such as Woking Town Centre or the High Street in Old Woking, the front wall of the building acts as the boundary line.
- 2.14 Where the boundary types are mixed, with walls, fences and hedges, the Council will normally expect a new development to use one of these boundary treatments. If it is an older, more established area, for example the Mount Hermon Conservation Area, then the Council may seek to reinstate boundary types which existed previously, to help promote the original character of the street. Where a development involving boundary treatments is proposed, the

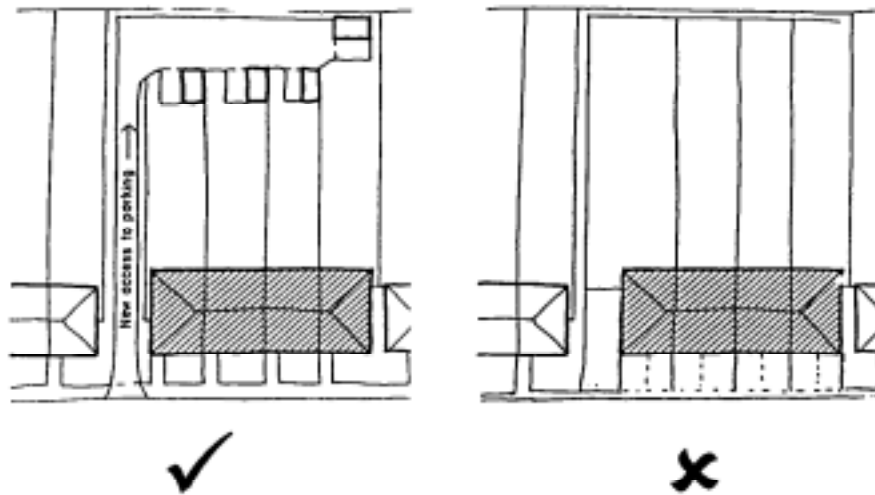
Council is unlikely to permit walls, fences, or railings over 1.0metres high where the predominant height of the existing boundary is also less than 1.0m high.

- 2.15 In an urban street where there is a repeated style of boundary treatments, for example low walls, then the Council will expect any development proposal involving the boundary to follow the style predominant in the street, in order to strengthen the existing unique character of the street scene. Planning consent is unlikely to be granted where an alternative treatment is proposed (see figure 4 below).



*Figure 4: Where there is a repeated style of boundary treatment such as low walling, the Council will expect this to be followed in order to maintain the existing character of the street scene.*

- 2.16 In areas where terraced houses with small front gardens exist (such as the Walton Road Area) and a new development is proposed, the Council will seek the provision of parking at the rear, where space allows. This enables a front boundary treatment to be provided that respects the character of the area (see figure 5 following).



**Figure 5:** *In some circumstances, the provision of parking at the rear of a new development may be possible and is preferred to the creation of large areas of tarmac in front gardens and public amenity areas.*

2.17 The Council discourages the removal of hedges, fences, or walls in these locations, to allow access for a parking area at the front, as it is likely to erode the character of the street scene. Where it is unavoidable, the provision of a tidy finish to the remaining structure is encouraged. The Council will prepare a separate guidance note on this issue see figure 6 below).



**Figure 6:** *The demolition of boundaries to provide parking erodes the character of the street scene.*

### **Open Plan Developments**

2.18 Open Plan developments are designed to be without obvious front boundaries. In these areas, the front gardens themselves provide the open amenity in the area. In some areas, such as the Goldsworth Park development, planning conditions have been introduced and permitted development rights removed, in order to ensure the open plan development is retained.

- 2.19 In such areas, the Council will seek to keep this open plan form of development by refusing planning permission for the erection of solid enclosures such as walls and fences. Even modest fences, such as post and rail fencing, or low knee rails, will have a detrimental impact on the amenity of the area and will alter its unique, open character, by creating a sense of enclosure (see figure 7 below).



**Figure 7:** *The enclosing of front gardens on an ‘open plan’ estate with walls and fences will completely change the character of the street scene and are discouraged.*

### **3.0 MAINTENANCE ISSUES**

- 3.1 The maintenance of hedges and fences along highway frontages are the responsibility of the owner. In some cases soft verges and ditches are also privately owned. Where a hedge overhangs the highway, or a fence has become dilapidated and causes an obstruction, or there is an unkempt verge and ditch, the Council will inform the owner that, if they fail to carry out the maintenance themselves, any maintenance work necessary will be undertaken by the Council and the costs retrieved from the owner.
- 3.2 Any owner of a hedge or trees along a boundary should also ensure that they do not exceed a height or width which would cause a significant loss of daylight, or a significant amount of overshadowing of an adjacent property.
- 3.3 Care should be given to the choice of hedging as a poor choice can often lead to neighbour disputes. The Council will normally expect a similar species to be used which is found in the immediate area. Recent press coverage has highlighted that the planting of fast growing trees such as *Leylandii* on a boundary can result in serious neighbour disputes. *Leylandii* will not usually be a good species to use as it grows too tall and may look incongruous in the street scene whilst blocking out the light and views. Central Government has recently produced a Guidance leaflet on suitable hedging which addresses this issue, copies of which are available from the Council. In addition, the Council intends to produce a public information leaflet on this issue.

## Appendix 1

### Woking Borough Local Plan 1999 – Policy BE1

#### BE1 DESIGN OF NEW DEVELOPMENT

WHEN CONSIDERING APPLICATIONS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT, REDEVELOPMENT OR EXTENSIONS, THE COUNCIL WILL EXPECT A HIGH STANDARD OF DESIGN AND LAYOUT. DEVELOPMENT WILL BE EXPECTED TO:-

- (i) BE APPROPRIATE TO THE SITE IN TERMS OF OVERALL SCALE AND EXTENT INCLUDING STRUCTURES AND HARD SURFACES;
- (ii) RESPECT THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA AND PAY DUE REGARD TO THE LAYOUT, SPACING AND RELATIONSHIP OF EXISTING DEVELOPMENTS TO THE STREET PATTERN;
- (iii) BE APPROPRIATE TO THE SITE LOCATION IN TERMS OF HEIGHT, FORM, MASSING AND EXTERNAL APPEARANCE INCLUDING THE COLOUR AND TEXTURE OF EXTERNAL FACING MATERIALS;
- (iv) PAY DUE REGARD TO SIGNIFICANT FEATURES OF THE SITE, SUCH AS TOPOGRAPHY, WATER, MATURE TREES, HEDGES AND EXISTING STRUCTURES; AND
- (v) AVOID VISUAL AND AUDIBLE CONFLICT WITH ADJOINING LAND USES AND PROVIDE AND RETAIN SUITABLE BOUNDARY TREATMENT AND LANDSCAPING.

#### JUSTIFICATION

- 4.31 New development, whether by redevelopment, extensions, or new buildings can have a significant impact upon the environment, both positively and negatively. Because of the long term effects which can result from poorly considered designs, it is important that new buildings are of a high standard of design and external appearance in order to protect and enhance the appearance of the built environment and maintain adequate levels of public and private amenity.
- 4.32 The design to be adopted will vary according to the function of the building and the context in which it is located. The Council will expect commercial development in the town centre, for instance, to be imaginative and create new points of interest, whereas a more traditional approach will often be appropriate for new housing in an established residential area.
- 4.33 New development will be expected to make the most of the natural features of the site and take opportunities to incorporate these within developments for their visual properties and their screening and softening effect.
- 4.34 The Council may produce Supplementary Planning Guidance to give further advice on specific design matters. Residential development will also be expected to comply with policies HSG18 -24 in Chapter 6.



## Appendix 2

### Planning Controls Regarding the Erection and Demolition of Boundary Treatments.

Planning permission **is** required if:

- the boundary treatment to be erected would be over 1.0 metre high and next to a highway used by vehicles, or over 2.0 metres high elsewhere;
- the boundary treatment is within the curtilage of a Statutory Listed Building;
- the boundary treatment is within a Conservation Area and is to be completely demolished, where it is over 1.0 metre high and next to a highway (including a public footpath or bridleway) or public open space; or over 2.0 metres high elsewhere;
- there is a condition attached to the planning consent for the property which restricts the enclosure of a boundary, or a landscaping condition which requires the type of hedge or tree planting to be agreed by the Council prior to a development being started;
- a new or wider access or driveway is proposed on to a trunk or other classified road (A separate approval from the Streetcare Services is also required if a new access crosses a pavement or verge) Planning permission for the change of use of amenity land may also be required.

Planning permission **is not** required if:

- the boundary treatment is to be the planting of a hedge or trees (except where a landscaping condition has been imposed);
- the boundary treatment is to be removed or demolished (unless attached to a Statutory Listed Building or within a Conservation Area);
- a new or wider access or driveway is proposed on to a non-classified road ( A Licence will be required from the Highway Authority for this work).

If there is any doubt, the Council should be contacted.

#### Trees

A large number of trees in the Borough are protected by Tree Preservation Orders and any work to them requires consent. In addition, where a tree is located within a conservation area and has a diameter of more than 75mm, then the Council must be given at least six weeks notice prior to any work being carried out.

**Unauthorised work to protected trees is a serious criminal offence. If anyone fells or otherwise wilfully damages a tree so that it will be destroyed, whether it is covered by a Tree Preservation Order or within a conservation area and they have failed to notify the Council, they are liable to a maximum fine of up to £20,000. Where conviction is on indictment, there is no limit to the fine which may be imposed.**

Where a tree is protected by a Tree Preservation Order or within a conservation area and the Council has not been notified, and the tree is maimed but not destroyed, then a fine of up to £2,500 can be incurred.

For more detailed information a 'Preservation of Trees' leaflet is available from the Council.

# GLOSSARY

## EXAMPLES OF ACCEPTABLE BOUNDARY TREATMENTS

### Hedges and Trees

- Generally, where a particular type of hedging or tree species is predominant, the Council will expect new planting of the same species.
- In the Green Belt and other rural areas in the Borough, the Council will expect a native species of planting, such as a traditional mixed hedges of hawthorn, field maple, beech, and hornbeam. These hedges may include trees such as oak, cherry or ash.
- Within Arcadian, urban and town centre areas, the more traditional hedges are the most acceptable species of boundary hedge which the Council will seek in new development. Although they may be slow to establish, they are easier to maintain in the long run, and are usually evergreen, dense, and long lasting. Species include laurel, hazel, holly, yew, box, hornbeam and beech (although not evergreen, these latter two species keep their leaves and provides seasonal interest).
- Alternatively, shrubs such as escallonia, viburnum, and elaeagnus may be grown with attractive garden boundary hedges.
- Other types of hedging which are commonly used but do not contribute as much to the character of the street than the more traditional forms, and are not favoured by the Council, include cupress types (slow growing varieties are preferred rather than the fast growing types such as leylandii which are often the cause of neighbour disputes) and privet (this species, although common, will not be as long lasting as alternative species).
- Some boundary treatments consist of dense shrubs such as rhododendrons and azaleas but care needs to be taken when planting these as they can grow quickly and overrun an area.
- Where there is to be an opening of a gap in the hedge for a new access or driveway, careful siting is required to minimise the amount of hedge loss. The Council will expect a hedge to be replanted with the matching species behind the sight lines of the access. In addition, the Council intends to produce a public information leaflet on this issue.

### Soft Verges and Ditches

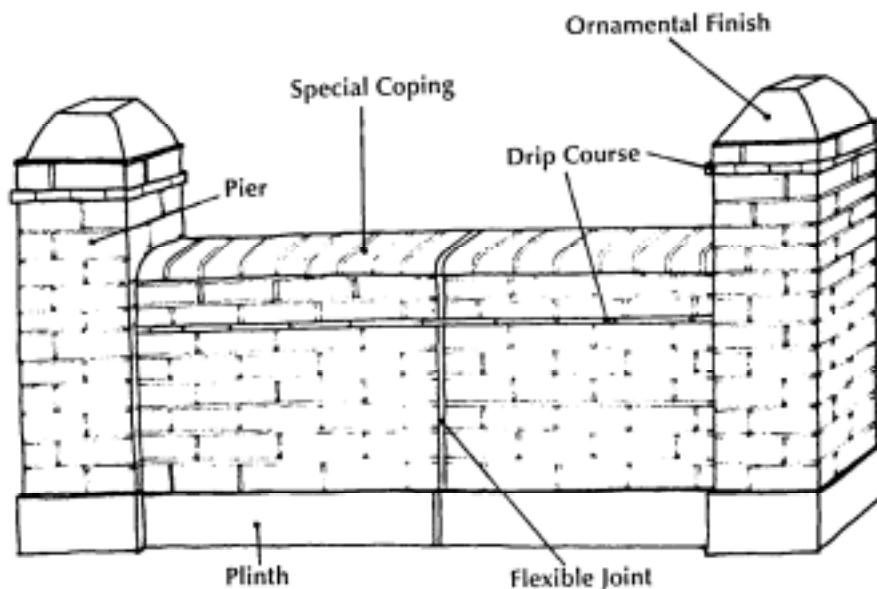
- The soft verge is often adopted as part of the highway in order to maintain sight lines in and out of a property, and may also include services provided by the Statutory Undertakers (that is, water, gas, electricity and cable networks) or abut a ditch for surface water drainage. In some cases ditches may have been the original demarcation of the boundary line.
- Where soft verges and ditches exist the Council will expect any new development to maintain these as a continuous feature where they are a significant factor in the street scene.



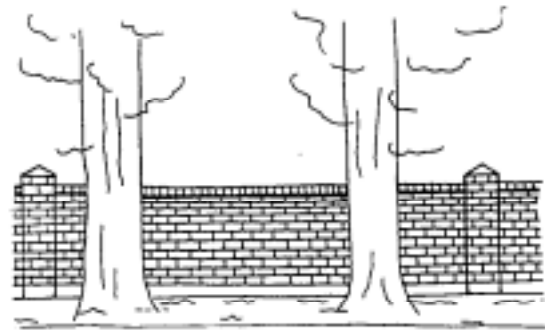
pavement soft verge ditch boundary

## Brick Walls

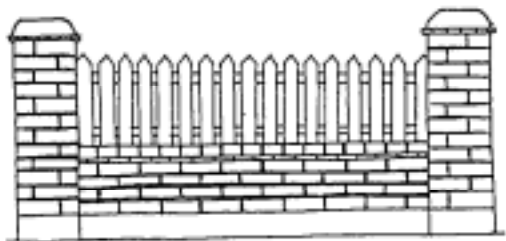
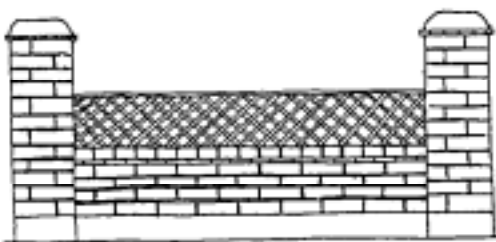
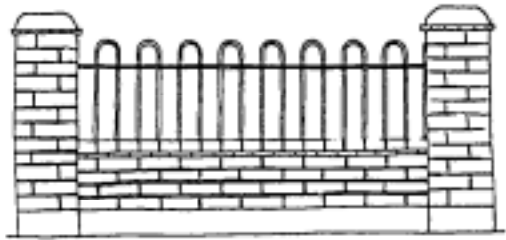
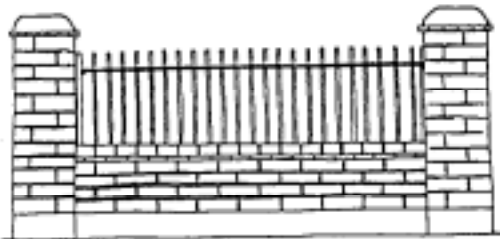
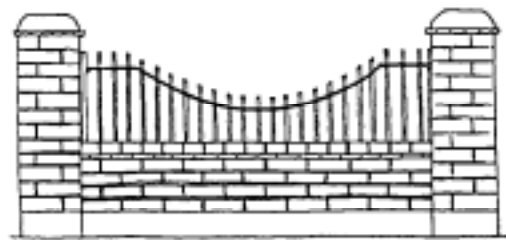
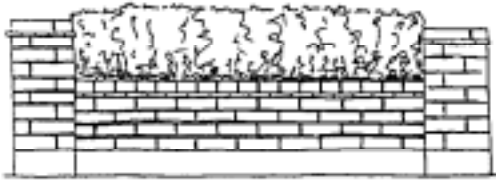
- Where brick walls are acceptable (usually in urban and town centre locations) the Council will encourage the correct construction techniques as these can contribute or detract from the character of the area. The use of inappropriate building materials, such as concrete breeze blocks, will be resisted as this negatively effects the appearance of the area. Elements which the Council will encourage in the construction are shown below:



- The use of materials is also important in the construction of the wall. The following factors should be noted:
  - \* Local materials should be used.
  - \* Stock bricks or second-hand materials should be used.
  - \* The facing bricks must match the existing property and/or those of existing boundary walls.
  - \* Any walls and piers should terminate with a suitable weatherproof coping.
  - \* Ornamental finishing should be considered for the piers which will add to the appearance of the street scene (particularly in Conservation Areas).
- Occasionally, walls greater than 1.0m are permitted along front boundaries, usually when surrounding large plots, or large, estate-like developments, for example at St Peters Convent on Maybury Hill. However, this type of wall has a much greater impact being more bulky and solid, and is rarely acceptable.
- On the occasion where walls greater than 1.0m high are permitted, the Council may expect shrub or hedge planting in front of the wall, in order to soften its appearance and reduce the negative impact on the street scene. Where established planting already exists the Council will also expect that the roots will be protected when the wall footings are installed.

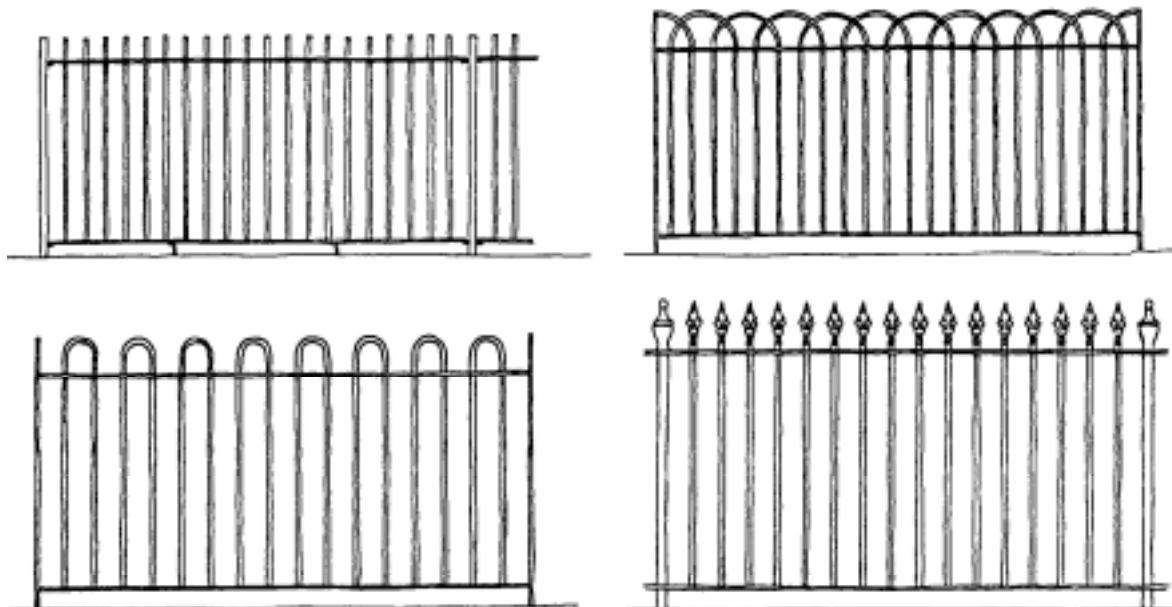


- Where walls are constructed which are less than 1.0m in height the following examples of combinations using low brick walls are the type that maintain the character of the street scene. Their use should be dependant on what already exists in the street.



## Metal Railings

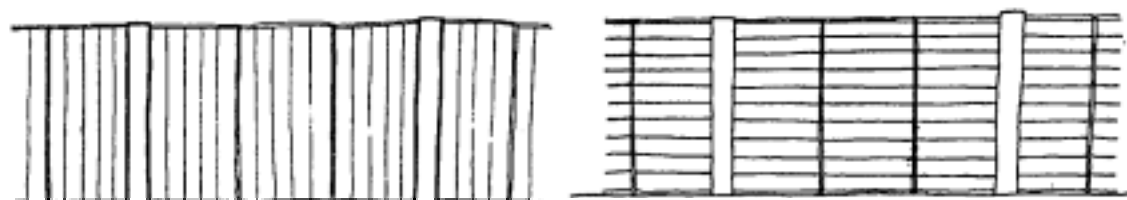
- Metal railings can provide an elegant, formal boundary treatment usually associated with urban locations. Occasionally, when railings may be acceptable in an area of soft landscaping, the Council will expect shrub or hedge planting behind the railings that will grow through later on.
- The following examples are types of railing which are normally acceptable within the more urban locations of the Borough:-



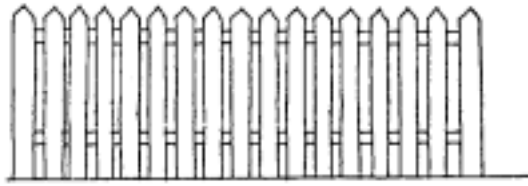
- In some instances, for example close to where children play, the Council will discourage the use of metal railings with spikes.
- In the town centre and within modern residential developments it may be more appropriate to introduce alternative styles of railings with more modern designs than those shown above.

## Fencing

- Fences can often be an effective and cheaper method of screening, giving a more formal appearance to the street scene, and one which is easier to maintain and therefore more suited to urban and town centre locations.
- The colour and style of wooden fencing is a matter of personal choice. Only where a new fence is likely to have a significant impact, for example in environmentally sensitive areas such as conservation areas and on Statutory Listed Buildings, will the Council consider the use of planning conditions when granting consent. Elsewhere, the use of coloured fencing can be incongruous in the street scene, and if colour is to be used, then more natural coloured stains are preferred.
- Where hedges predominate, in the Green Belt and UASRC areas the effect of constructing a close boarded fence is to change the character of the area by breaking up the continuity of soft landscaping and will not be permitted unless they are required for security reasons and are erected by a soft landscaped screen.
- The predominant types of wood fencing acceptable in Woking, include the following:-



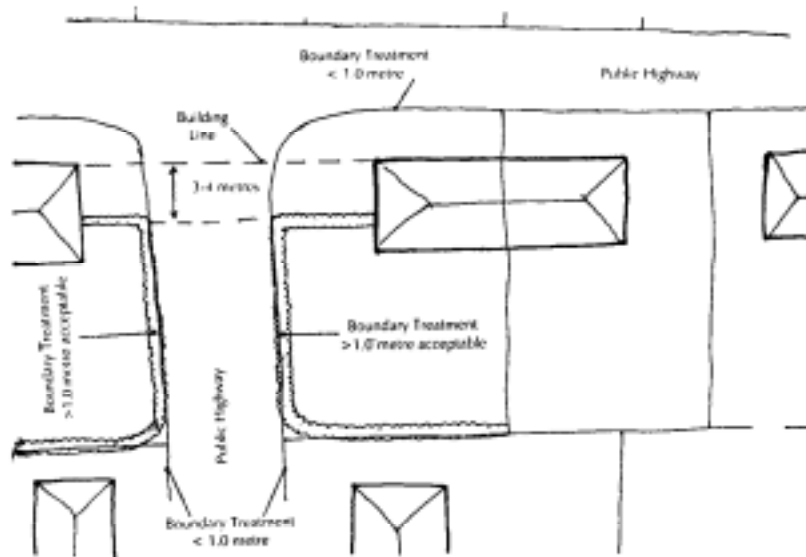
Close boarded fencing acts as screening for privacy and is generally for use in rear gardens. If acceptable along the front boundary in UASRC, the Council will expect some form of planting in front of the fence.



Picket fencing allows some privacy but is of also a less solid form of fencing for UASRC, giving a less harsh appearance.

Post and rail fencing allows the open nature the Green Belt to be maintained and would not normally be acceptable in urban areas.

- Chainlink fencing also proves popular for marking a boundary. In residential locations where fencing is not the major treatment to the boundary, the Council will expect shrub planting/hedge planting in front of this type of fencing, as it is incongruous on its own. Coloured chainlink fencing (black, green, or brown) is more acceptable than silver/grey chainlink fencing and will be expected along highway frontages, particularly in Arcadian areas.



- In some locations the front and side of a property both adjoin a public highway. In such circumstances the Council may require the main front boundary and approximately 3-4 metres of the side boundary behind the building line to remain at 1.0 metre high or less - this distance will vary depending on the length of garden (see diagram above).