

The 'Character Areas'



As Letchworth Garden City was developed over a number of years, there is a clear difference in the style and character in parts of the town. This resulted in the introduction in 2009 of defined Character Areas, which have been revised in this document.

HERITAGE CHARACTER AREA

MODERN CHARACTER AREA

Following a review, the original three Character Areas have now been reduced to two; the Heritage Character Area and the Modern Character Area.

There is a set of Design Principles for each character area. These have been developed taking into account the style and characteristics of specific homes and streets, rather than simply the age of the buildings.

Each area has been defined through a detailed examination of characteristics relevant to individual homes and streets, including the date of the property, house style, detail and materials, road layout, parking, house orientation, the building line, trees and verges, front gardens, boundaries and density.

In addition, the design of some homes will differ from their Character Area. For example where individual modern properties have been built within the Heritage Character Area, or where an older home lies within the Modern Character Area.

In all cases each home will be considered on its own merits, although the impact of alterations on the surrounding context as well as an individual property will be addressed.

To find out the Character Area your home is in, you can use an online search at www.lechworth.com/designprinciples or call us on 01462 476017.



The Design Principles

The Design Principles outlined in this publication relate to the Modern Character Area of Letchworth Garden City.

The area includes a wide range of housing styles, with some specific areas having a unique generic style.

Many homes have open frontages set along wide roads. They were generally built with contemporary materials such as pressed bricks and concrete roof tiles.

The modern nature of these homes allows for less prescriptive design principles.

Using the Design Principles

The Design Principles have been developed to help you plan and implement any external alterations to your home, large or small.

Split into distinct sections, the Principles address a wide range of building changes, from extensions to windows, to doors and hardstandings.

If you are contemplating making changes, it is important that you review all the relevant Principles, bearing in mind an extension may also need to consider the Design Principles for other features such as windows and doors.

The Principles generally indicate what is and is not acceptable when seeking to make alterations. However, each case will be considered on its own merits assessing the impact of proposals on the character and quality of the subject property and its context.

In all cases a high quality and considered design will be sought.

Hartington Place & Ralph Swingler Place

If you are a resident of the award winning development at Hartington Place or Ralph Swingler Place, Principles for the Heritage Character Area apply.

Heritage Grants

Grants may be available for certain works on your property frontage. More information can be found at www.lethworth.com/heritage-grants or by calling 01462 476017

PLEASE BE AWARE...

The purpose of the Design Principles is to provide assistance for applicants and their agents as to what may or may not be reasonably acceptable in certain circumstances. However, in view of the breadth of styles of property and street scene in the Garden City Estate, each case will be carefully considered on the specific circumstances of the property and its context. In all cases a high quality and considered design will be sought.

A helpful glossary is provided on pages 30 to 32 explaining the building terms in this document.

Contents

Rear extensions	7
Side extensions	9
Front extensions	10
Porches to main entrances	12
Garage conversions	13
Loft conversions, dormer windows, roof lights and sun tunnels	14
Chimneys and flues	15
New or extended garages	16
External Doors	17
Windows	18
Roofs and Alterations to external walls	19
External wall insulation, guttering, pipes and hopper heads	20
Balconies and Trees	21
Hardstandings	22
Sheds and detached outbuildings	24
Satellite dishes	25
Hedges, fencing and gates	26
Vehicular gates	27
Plot Splits	27
Photovoltaic cells and solar hot water panels	28
Rainwater harvesting grey water recycling, wind turbines	29
Glossary	30
Contemplating changes?	33

Design Principles for the Modern Character Area of Letchworth Garden City



Rear extensions

The later Modern Character Area homes were largely built to reflect the modern design concepts of the time but guided by the Garden City ethos.

The homes range in size from small terraced houses to larger detached and semi-detached buildings. There are examples of homes which have architectural qualities that are a valuable feature of the town. They largely share a common vision of creating an environment that links town and country – trees and gardens are an important element of this vision.

- The space between buildings is an important feature of the whole garden city and should be maintained.
- Rear extensions should complement the character of the original house, utilising the detailing and complementing materials, and have balanced proportions and scale.
- Roof pitches can have a substantial impact on the character of the original house; therefore proposed roof pitches shall be consistent with the original roof design of the house.
- Extensions that protrude past the side/gable wall of the original house are subject to the requirements for side extensions. (See Side Extensions on page 9)
- The area and volume of the proposed extension should be in proportion to the existing house and plot.
- Design shall respond to and harmonise with the individual qualities of the host building and its setting. Therefore, in all cases high quality design will be encouraged, whilst obviously, poor design will be rejected and alternative solutions sought.
- An appropriate rear garden should be provided to ensure that an adequate private amenity provision is retained, preventing a cramped or over-developed appearance.

Detached Dwellings

- Ground floor and 2 storey extensions up to a depth of 5 metres from the original main rear building line of the house may be acceptable. When 2 storey extensions would have an impact on neighbouring properties, a reduction in depth and/or width may be required.
- Extensions to houses on very large plots may exceed 5 metres from the original main rear building line, if it can be demonstrated that there is negligible affect on the neighbouring property and it is not detrimental to the character of the dwelling or its setting.
- The relationship between rear extensions on adjoining properties can create a poor appearance, in particular by reason of unsightly gaps.
- There can also be issues of maintenance when gaps between rear extensions are too small. In order to avoid this situation, rear extensions which adjoin a side boundary should either abut that boundary or be designed in order that a 0.6m gap can be provided between the flank wall of the extension and the neighbouring building, extension or future extension.
- This will normally mean that in cases where extensions do not abut the boundary, a gap of 0.3m to the boundary will be sought for each extension. This requirement does not override responsibilities under other legislation such as the Party Wall Act.



Side extensions

Many Modern Character Area homes retain the open characteristic of the Garden City including examples of sweeping access roads, in cul-de-sacs and around common open spaces, creating a rhythm of homes along each street.

The spacing between individual houses or terraces and the views to the green gardens behind them reinforced the connection between the town and country. The challenge today is to maintain the distance between the neighbouring homes to help retain this rhythm and the 'open feel'.

- The width of side extensions can greatly impact on the original character of the home and the street scene – particularly the vistas between these homes.
- It is preferable for extensions to be on the rear of the property as these normally have a reduced impact. Therefore rear additions should be explored in the first instance.
- Side extensions should be consistent with the character of the original house, utilising the detailing and matching materials, respecting the proportions and scale of the existing property.
- Roof pitches can have a substantial impact on the appearance of a building and the street scene; therefore all proposed roof pitches and design of the roof and roof line should be consistent with the original roof design of the house, unless it can be demonstrated that the extension does not damage the character and quality of the existing property and its context.

All Dwellings

- The area and volume of the proposed extension shall be subservient to and in proportion with the existing house and plot.
- Ground floor extensions shall retain a 1 metre gap to the boundary.

NOTE: The 1 metre gap is the default position. The Heritage Advisory Team will take into account, possible variances to this on a case by case basis.

- To maintain the open feel and space around detached and semi-detached dwellings, the side walls of proposed 2 storey and first floor side extensions shall be a minimum of 2 metres from a boundary.
- First floor extensions smaller than the footprint of the ground floor, can create a poorly proportioned and unbalanced building and generally will not be supported, unless it can be demonstrated that it would not be detrimental to the character appearance of the existing property and its contexts.
- The design of 2 storey extensions shall be sympathetic to the original property and its context.

Semi-Detached Dwellings

- Side extensions should retain the identity of the original property and be visually subservient. This is normally achieved by having lower roof lines and being significantly set back from the front building line.

End of Terrace Dwellings:

- Side extensions will not normally be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that it will not damage the group value of the existing terrace and its overall context.

Bungalows

- Ground floor extensions will only be accepted when they are of modest proportions and sympathetic to the appearance of the existing dwelling and its setting.

Front extensions

Modern Character Area homes were designed in a range of styles and varied design details, but the majority retained the Garden City ethos of space and green vistas.

The quality of the original design of these houses contributes to a special Letchworth Garden City street scene.

Adding elements, including extensions, to these façades can have an impact on this attractive street scene, particularly on terraced and semi-detached houses. These proposals will therefore be carefully considered as they can detract from the architectural value of the original and alter the relationship within a group of houses by:

- creating an unsightly or unduly prominent form of development;
- disrupting the uniformity of the front building line;
- disrupting the coherence of a group of semi-detached or terraced houses;
- diluting the 'group value' of a run or cluster of houses.

This is particularly the case with first floor extensions, which can have a serious impact on the original character of the house and the street scene.

Front extensions are discouraged

It is preferable for extensions to be on the rear of the property as these normally have a reduced impact on the character of the property and its context. Therefore rear additions should be explored in the first instance.

Proposals for front additions will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that they will not cause harm to the appearance of the existing property or its group. In the rare circumstance that this type of extension is permitted, the following Principles will apply:

- Front extensions should be consistent with the character of the original house, utilising the detailing and matching materials, and have balanced proportions and scale;
- Roof pitches can have a substantial impact on the appearance of a building and the street scene; therefore all proposed roof pitches and design of the roof and roof line shall be consistent with the original roof design of the house.

Design shall respond to and harmonise with the individual qualities of the host building and its setting. Therefore, in all cases high quality design will be encouraged, while obviously, poor design will be rejected and alternative solutions sought.

Porches to main entrances

A porch is a small extension immediately adjoining the main, usually front, entrance door, solely to protect visitors from inclement weather. Should a design proposal include any other accommodation such as a WC or cloakroom, reference should be made to the section on Front Extensions.

Adding elements to the front of homes can have an impact on the existing property and its context, particularly so on terraced and semi-detached houses. These could detract from the architectural value of the original and alter the relationship within a group of houses by:

- creating an unduly prominent form of development;
- disrupting the uniformity of the front building line;
- disrupting the coherence of a group of semi-detached or terraced houses;
- diluting the 'group value' of a run or cluster of houses.

Porches should complement the character of the original house and street scene, using in-keeping materials, and have balanced proportions and scale.

Design shall endeavour to respond to the individual qualities of the host building, plot size and its setting. Therefore, applications may still be refused consent on the grounds of inappropriate or poor design, even when other principles are complied with.

Proposed Porches on the Front Elevation

- Front porches are acceptable when they already exist as an acceptable feature within the context and will not break up the symmetry of, or unbalance a group of properties.
- They should not normally extend more than 1.2 metres from the original front main building line. (See Glossary on page 30)
- In some instances, such as on large houses with frontages over 6 metres deep, a deeper porch may be acceptable, where it is demonstrated that this will not harm the character of the existing property or in the case of terraced and semi-detached houses, the group of properties and their context.

Proposed Porches on Other Elevations

- The relationship to the side boundary should be considered and an enclosed porch should normally maintain a gap of at least 1 metre unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal will not lead to a cramped form of development or a 'terraced' impression.

NOTE: Reference should also be made to the sections for the front, side or rear extensions.

Existing Porches

- Removal of original features such as open porches, canopies or tiled hoods can damage the original character of the property and will not normally be supported.

Garage conversions

Homes in the Modern Character Area are characterised by contemporary detailing.

Turning a garage into a habitable room can have an impact on the style and appearance of individual houses and create increased need for parking on front gardens.

When there is sufficient justification to support the conversion, it should be normally ensured that:

- the property's frontage has capacity to provide at least two car parking spaces (standard size 2.4m x 4.8m); and
- the provision of the parking spaces complies with the requirements for hardstandings on pages 22 and 23.

The design criteria in these circumstances are:

- Retention of the garage doors is preferred, but if to be replaced by a window it should match the style and proportions of the original windows and should comply with the requirements for windows on page 18.
- New windows to provide light and ventilation to the converted garages should also comply with the requirements for windows on page 18.

Proposals to link a detached garage to the main house will be supported only if it will not diminish the views to the rear gardens or detract from the original design of the property.

Chimneys and flues

Chimneys are often used to establish balance on house façades. Chimneys are and should remain common features that enhance and bring vertical relief to the Letchworth Garden City roofscape.

- Unless in exceptional circumstances, existing chimney stacks or pots should not be removed.
- Shortening of the stacks should be avoided.
- Adding inappropriate pots or flue terminals should be avoided.
- New chimneys should be on the rear elevation.
- New chimneys will be acceptable if the proposed design, detailing, style and position is appropriate to the original house design and the street scene.
- Metal flues for wood burning stoves may be acceptable if:
 - sited in an unobtrusive position so they do not impose on the street scene;
 - they have a “silver” finish where the dwelling has white painted or light features; or black, dark brown or dark grey where the dwelling has stained or dark features or housed by a new chimney of an appropriate design and location.

You are advised to contact the Building Control Department at North Herts District Council to ensure that the new flue and chimney will not be harmful to you or your neighbours.

External Doors

Homes in the Modern Character Area have diverse detailing which reflects the move towards various modern materials.

A range of materials and designs are acceptable in the Modern Character Area.

Repairing an existing door or replacing it with one of a matching design and materials helps preserve the character of the original design and street scenes of Letchworth Garden City.

- New and replacement doors should normally match the original door design, and complement the style of the house and the street scene.
- The positioning and orientation of door openings should relate to the original design.
- Door features should normally adhere to the original design (e.g. canopies, hoods, lintels, glazing, double leaf etc).
- Materials matching the original door (e.g. timber) are encouraged. Composite and uPVC doors will be accepted where it is demonstrated that the proportions and appearance will match those of a traditional timber door or the original door.
- Stained or coloured glass may be acceptable if in keeping with the style and character of the original house design.
- External doors should be finished in a solid single colour to respect the character of the original house and its context.

Windows

Windows contribute significantly to the identity and value of individual and groups of houses and the street scene.

Repair and restoration of original windows with materials matching the original design can help enhance the character of the homes.

The size, location and materials of windows on the façade of a house strongly influence the overall composition and character of a home. Changes can completely alter the character, particularly if the house is one of a group.

The group value of buildings is strengthened through a similarity in window type and colour, symmetry in the positioning of windows and adherence to the original proportions and design.

Careful planning of any changes is essential to ensure the integrity of the home and street scene, in which it sits.

- The design of replacement windows should match the original windows for the property.
- Replacement windows should ideally match the style and design of the original windows in the property.
- A mix of materials in a single elevation will not be supported.
- Windows should remain open glazed if this was the original design.
- Materials matching the original window (e.g. timber) are preferred, but a range of materials are acceptable.
- External glazing bars or external leading are preferred where this was an original feature of the property.
- Equal sight lines are preferred where this was an original feature of the property.
- Where there are blocks of flats or houses that have been designed to be considered as one identity, replacement windows should usually match the originals and include external glazing bars and/or equal sight lines, where these were original features.
- The colour of all window frames and casements should match the originals or, if the original colour cannot be identified, they should relate to the original character of the property and its context.
- New window openings are only acceptable on the front elevation where it is demonstrated that this will not have a damaging impact on the existing property or its context.
- Positioning, type and size of new openings should be consistent with the original design of the property and style of the original windows.

Roofs – new roofs, alterations, re-tiling and repairs

The roofs of Modern Character Area houses use a range of traditional and modern designs and materials.

- Changes to the style and height of a roof will not normally be acceptable.
- Roof alterations should reflect the original roof design and specifications.
- Materials should normally relate to the original style of the existing house.

Alterations to external walls

Homes in the Modern Character Area continue the tradition of using innovative building materials.

These materials have become a distinctive trait of the Garden City and are one of the factors that create cohesion and character in neighbourhoods and buildings. Groups of buildings, that were designed and built together, are particularly vulnerable to changes of colour on façades – disrupting the sense of unity.

Many homes were originally finished with unpainted rendering and continue to create unity in groups of houses and in the street scene. The retention of these homes in their original state is an important part of retaining the quality of the street scene.

The painting of unpainted properties can have long term implications and is not encouraged and will only be supported if:

- it can be demonstrated that this would have a beneficial impact on the street scene;
- there are exceptional local circumstances;
- it will not damage the character of the property or its context.

Exposed brickwork should not be painted.

Bricks, joints and mortar of new brickwork should match the original brickwork as closely as possible.

Painted render should normally be repainted in the original colour. If the original colour cannot be identified, a neutral colour should be used that maintains cohesion within groups of buildings, street scenes and neighbourhoods.

Artificial cladding of properties is subject to separate guidance (See External Wall Insulation on Page 20)



Painted roughcast



Exposed brickwork



Pebble dash

External wall insulation

External wall cladding can also have a negative impact on the appearance and character of a building.

Applying wall insulation externally can cover up important features and detailing, for example: string courses, window head and sill detailing, cornicing and decorative plaques.

Even the appearance of a relatively plain house can be affected by deeper window and door reveals. Present external wall cladding systems are approximately 50mm thick. When applied to a single house in a pair of semi-detached, a terrace or a group, the effect can be detrimental to the appearance and cohesion of the group.

Therefore, external cladding will only be supported when;

- the house is detached.
- the detailing and features of the property, including the brick and render finish, string courses, window and door reveals are maintained or carefully recreated.
- all of the properties in a pair of semi-detached, terrace or group, collectively and simultaneously implement the works.

Guttering, pipes and hopper heads

The simple and functional building forms established by the early architects of Letchworth influenced the designs of homes in the Modern Character Area.

Guttering and downpipes in contrasting colours to the body of the house were often an integral part of the original design. The retention of this characteristic is important to the integrity and value individual properties, groups of houses and neighbourhoods.

- Careful positioning of replacement guttering, soil, vent and downpipes and the use of the original colour, can help to minimise the impact on the street scene.
- Additional guttering soil and downpipes to the front elevations should normally be avoided.

Balconies

Generally balconies are acceptable but can upset the balance and scale of buildings and therefore the design should be carefully considered.

- The design would need to reflect the size and design of the existing house.
- All balconies should generally be located at the rear of the host building.
- 'Juliet' balconies are generally acceptable.
- Full balconies which create an amenity leisure space at a first floor level or higher may be acceptable, but regard to the privacy of the neighbours will be a major consideration.

Trees

Letchworth Garden City's unique place in architectural and urban history is intimately related to the creation of rural qualities within an urban environment.

The mature trees along roads and in gardens and parks, contribute significantly to the prominent green and natural character of the Garden City.

Preserving existing trees or replacing trees that are becoming sick or hazardous, is essential to preserving Letchworth's green vistas and gardens. Permission is required for removal of trees and an application must be made to the Heritage Foundation.

- Existing trees shall not be removed unless there is a proven justifiable cause.
- In granting approval for a tree to be removed, an appropriate replacement will generally be required.
- When proposing alterations to a property, protection of existing trees will be an important consideration and the implications of proposed works on existing trees, including on neighbouring properties, should be included in applications to the Heritage Foundation.

Please note that some works may require prior approval from North Hertfordshire District Council which you are recommended to contact before starting.

IMPORTANT NOTE...

The Heritage Foundation can provide advice on the trees appropriate to your property. The Heritage Foundation cannot mediate, assist or pronounce on boundary disputes involving trees or hedges.



Hardstandings continued

The materials used should be carefully considered.

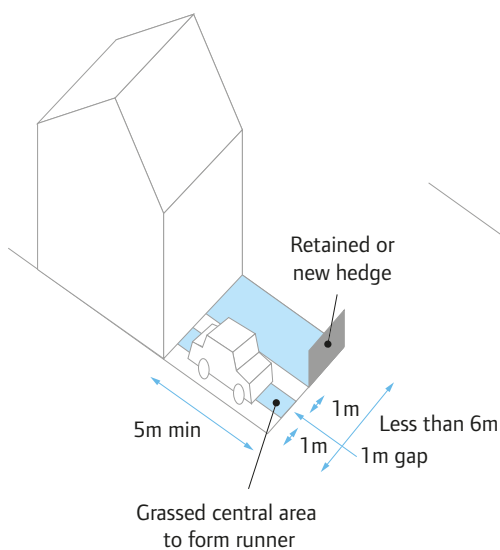
Porous materials and permeable paving that reduce the impact of surface water run-off into water courses are strongly encouraged.

Although gravel is not acceptable for soft landscaped areas, it may be used for hardstandings, but should include measures to stop it spilling onto the highway.

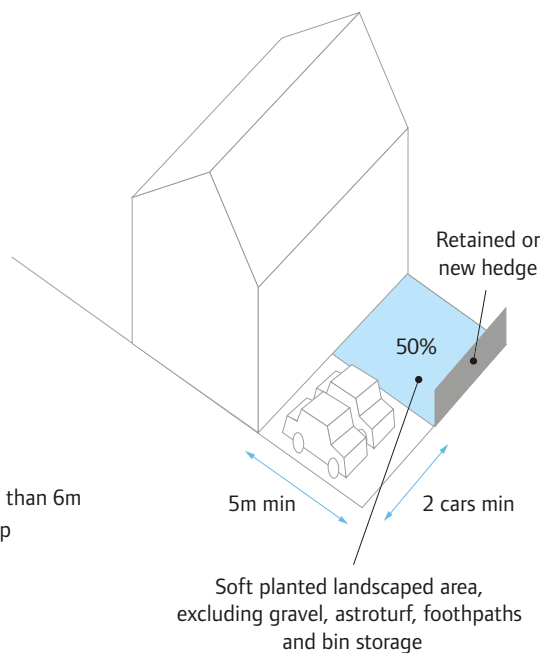
Neutral coloured concrete block paviors, stones and setts are acceptable.

Mass concrete and brightly coloured paviors are not acceptable. Patterns, motifs or symbols should not normally be incorporated.

EXTENDED PARKING - NARROW PLOTS



EXTENDED PARKING - WIDE PLOTS



SOMETHING TO NOTE...

Many properties in the 'Modern Character Area' have no capacity for on-site parking.

It is not compulsory to build the required parking spaces at the time of adding an extension, but space for future construction should be available.

To reduce surface water pressure on drains, a soakaway underneath the paved area of hardstanding is encouraged.

Main roads can have heavy traffic and therefore cause problems for residents, if they have to reverse out of their driveways.

Main roads are considered to be:

- Baldock Road
- Bedford Road
- Broadway
- Green Lane
- Hitchin Road
- Icknield Way (Bedford Road roundabout to Wilbury Hills Road)
- Norton Way North and South
- Norton Road
- Pixmore Avenue
- Pixmore Way
- Wilbury Hills Road

Sheds and detached outbuildings

A key principle in the early Garden City was to keep densities low and ensure homes had sufficient associated garden space to reinforce the rural environment.

Sheds and detached outbuildings are an integral part of the use of gardens. They should however, be in scale with the green space available.

- Sheds and detached outbuildings should be located in rear gardens.
 - Sheds and detached outbuildings should not detract from the character and quality of the existing property or its context.
 - Sheds and detached outbuildings up to 6 square metres in area and 2.2 metre ridge height will not require consent.
 - Sheds and detached outbuildings will not normally be acceptable if they exceed 10% of the area of the rear garden, free of buildings, to a maximum of 20 square metres and/or over 3 metres in height.
 - Sheds and detached outbuildings that exceed these dimensions may be accepted if their size is not out of proportion to the house and they do not dominate the rear garden or have a significant impact on the neighbouring property, including its garden.
 - More than one shed or outbuilding may be acceptable, but the cumulative area should not be more than 10% of the area of the rear garden and a maximum of 20 square metres.
 - Any outbuilding should provide at least 0.6m from any boundary.
- Outbuildings that provide a separate unit of accommodation will be discouraged and may require a separate approval under the terms of your lease or the Scheme of Management.
 - The use of outbuildings for any Commercial activity may require a Business Licence from the Heritage Foundation and possibly planning permission from North Hertfordshire District Council.

Outbuildings include: climbing frames, tree houses and other structures.

- The height of platforms on children's play equipment, tree houses and other structures, can cause privacy concerns for neighbours. The design must therefore, give due respect to garden size, proximity to boundaries and the privacy of neighbouring properties and gardens.

Satellite dishes

Adding satellite dishes can upset the symmetry of a house, particularly if added to the front façade.

Consent is not required for fitting a dish if it is no greater than 45cm in diameter. However, the following comments should be taken into consideration:

- satellite dishes should be on the rear of the house unless a signal cannot be received;
- discreet locations should be considered; (See diagram)
- only one dish per property.

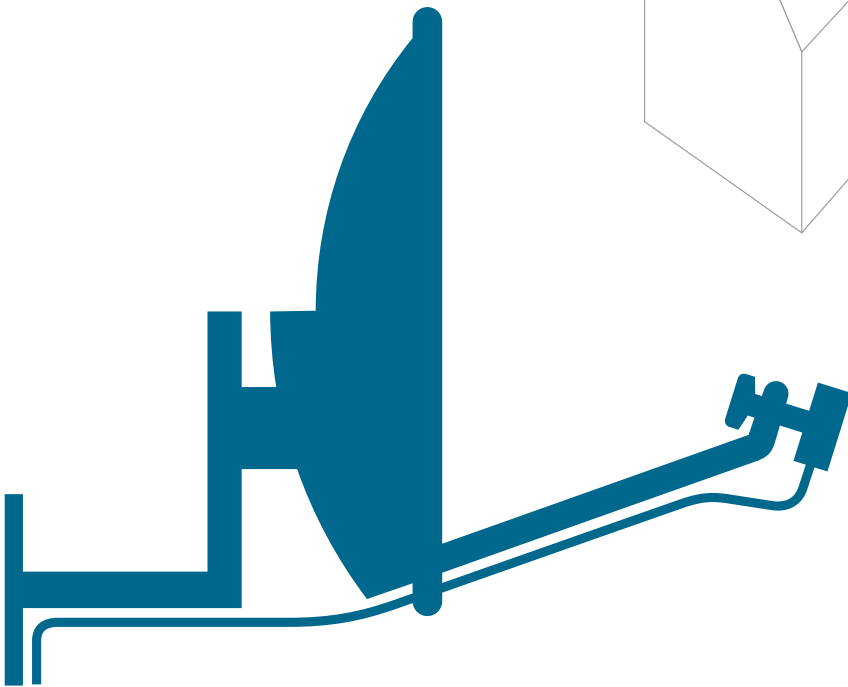
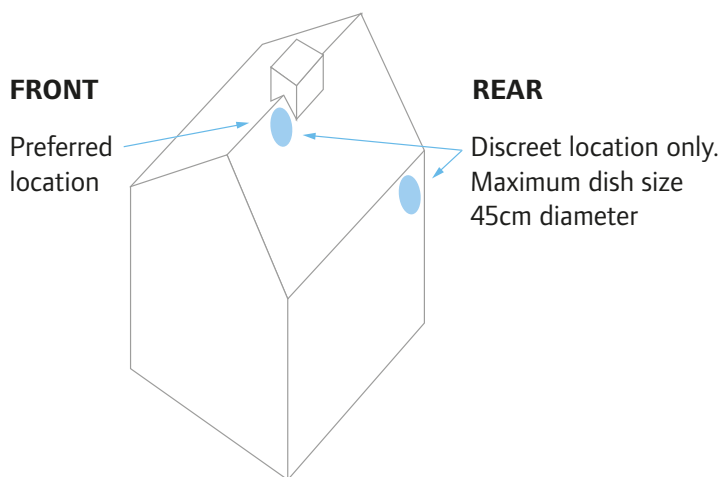
Consent is required for:

- dishes with a diameter greater than 45cm.

Consent will not normally be given for:

- dishes with a diameter greater than 45cm on front or prominent side walls;
- dishes more than 80cm in diameter;
- more than one dish per property;
- dishes in a colour not appropriate to the existing house.

Redundant dishes should be removed.



Hedges, fencing and gates

There are many examples in the Modern Character Area, of open frontages creating an open and airy public realm and views through the development; along with houses with modest front hedges and/or low fences.

This feature enhances the links to the rural and green surroundings and plays a part in the biodiversity of the Garden City. In many cases growing large hedges and building high fences and walls can be detrimental to this characteristic of the street scene.

- Boundaries to the highway should match the predominant original frontage boundary treatments. Hedges or fences to highway boundaries will be resisted in 'open frontage' streets.
- Existing hedges to frontage should normally be retained and their protection will be an important factor when considering alterations.
- Heights and types of frontage hedges and/or fences should reflect those on the same street, but as a general guide, they should have a maximum height of 1.2 metres.
- Privet, box and beech are the recommended varieties of hedging. Other suggested hedging plants are; berberis, hornbeam, Ionicera nitida and yew.
- Conifers should be avoided.
- Existing pedestrian gates should normally be retained.
- Close boarded or woven type fences are not normally permissible on frontages, but are acceptable on the rear garden boundaries.
- If a hedge dies due to disease etc, it should be replaced using suitable hedging plants to be agreed.
- Close boarded or woven type fences that are on the rear garden boundaries, and are under 2 metres in height do not require consent.

Hertfordshire Highways may have requirements on maximum heights if it affects traffic visibility.

Vehicular gates

Vehicular gates are generally not appropriate but may be acceptable in some circumstances, including if they are:

- located in tree lined streets with wide verges, and where vehicular gates are part of the original concept for the area;
- not detrimental to, or dominate, the appearance of the house or the character of the street scene;
- set behind the boundary hedge;
- less than 3 metres in width and 1.2 metres in height;
- in a neutral colour;
- at least 6.5 metres from the front/ building line.

PLEASE BE AWARE...

Hertfordshire Highways approvals for dropped kerbs have specific requirements related to the visibility splays and sufficient depth on site for a car to park. The introduction of gates could prevent these criteria from being met.

A 6.5 metre distance between the frontage highway boundary and the building line should allow for a car to be parked and the opening or closing of 1/2 leaf of a 3 metre wide vehicular gate.

Stopping on a road to open a gate may cause a potential safety hazard and traffic obstruction. This is of particular concern when determining an application for vehicular gates especially if the house is located in a main thoroughfare.

The Heritage Foundation can provide advice on the type of hedging appropriate to your property.

Plot Splits

Plot splits to form two or more dwellings on what was originally a single dwelling plot will normally require approval under the terms of your lease or Scheme of Management. There is a presumption against plot splits and redevelopment of existing properties. If you are considering this type of proposal you should apply for a lease amendment or amendment under the Scheme of Management. The relevant drawings and details will form part of the legal process when forming the amended lease and therefore will be deemed to have the Foundation's approval.

Once your application for a lease or deed amendment is received, it will be assigned to one member of the team who will follow it through until its conclusion.

DON'T FORGET...

Most residential plots in Letchworth Garden City are covenanted to be used for 'one dwelling house' only; generally the Heritage Foundation would not consent to revise this and reserves the right to maintain the status of the original covenant.

Photovoltaic cells and solar hot water panels

One of Letchworth Garden City's aims was to establish a harmonious relationship between the built environment and nature.

While supportive of residents' wishes to adapt their homes to help offset climate changes, we also need to protect the built environment.

The challenge is to balance the aesthetic needs of the domestic environment with the need to reduce consumption of unsustainable energy resources.

In most cases, the installation of solar panels/PV cells is usually acceptable if the following criteria are met:

- panels should preferably be on rear roof slopes; where this is not possible they should be as inconspicuous as possible and the panel size must not dominate the building or its context;
- solar hot water panel installation should not normally exceed 6 square metres in area;
- installations should not be located on the front roofs of single storey or chalet style dwellings;
- PV and solar panels should cover no more than 60% of the roof plane area and should be 0.6 metres from the edge of the roof plane and 0.3m from the ridge. The arrangement should be rectangular to avoid fragmented edges;
- solar/PV panels may be more acceptable if placed on the roofs of detached garages, sheds or outbuildings. Alternatively, a free standing array could be mounted in the rear garden;
- metal reflector paint behind vacuum tubes is not acceptable;
- wall mounted panels are not acceptable on elevations visible from the street.

Solar technology is evolving all the time and we will consider applications for new evolutions of the technology based on the principles outlined in this section.

WORTH NOTING...

In some cases it will not be possible to have an installation with an area large enough to supply 100% of the building's hot water and/or electricity needs; also some properties will not be able to accommodate the area required for current or future government tariffs or subsidies.

Rainwater harvesting, grey water recycling

The re-use of rainwater and recycling grey water can be a positive contributor to sustainable living.

Finding a balance between sustainability and aesthetics can be challenging. Underground tanks can create ideal water storage conditions, while the location of bulky water containers needs careful consideration.

- Design should complement the overall character of the building.
- The storage area should not dominate the existing house.

Wind turbines

Letchworth Garden City was founded on the idea of urban living in the peacefulness of a natural environment.

The streets of the Heritage Character Area reflect this balance, with buildings set in gardens with mature planting and calm atmosphere.

The roof line is characteristically punctuated by original chimneys designed to complement the house. The introduction of foreign elements may unbalance the symmetry of the roof lines.

- Wind turbines are generally not appropriate, but will be considered, in suitable locations, where there is proof of wind speeds, acceptable acoustics and negligible impact on the street scene and the host building.

IMPORTANT NOTICE...

Domestic wind turbines on buildings, or on free standing posts, range in rotor size from 1 metre to 11 metres in diameter. To be most effective the turbines should be higher and clear of any obstructions less than 20 metres away.

For most houses in Letchworth Garden City to be efficient the turbines would have to be fixed at a considerable height (minimum 15 metres). This arrangement could have a major impact on the street scene and visual amenity of the neighbouring properties.

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