Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

Residential Backland Development

Supplementary Planning Document

Solihull MBC

Please note. This copy of the SPD is not the final version as it will be reformatted in due course.

Solihull MBC

Contents

Introduction

Context and objective of this guidance

1.1 Residential backland developments have a role to play in delivering housing targets for the Borough. However, they also have the potential to create significant adverse impacts in the communities where they are located. Therefore, this Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is intended to explain how backland and related infill developments can be designed to protect and enhance existing residential areas.

1.2 This Supplementary Planning Document contains guidance on design principles to be applied to backland development proposals. Whilst the weight afforded to each of these principles will vary according to the site in question, the Supplementary Planning Document provides greater clarity to applicants regarding the key issues; the Council will assess on a case by case basis. One of the reasons for producing this Supplementary Planning Document is that it is often the case that not enough weight is afforded to design requirements when the economic incentives to develop are being considered. Applicants and their advisors can use this guidance to ascertain the most appropriate design response for their site and whether to take proposals forward to detailed planning stages.

1.3 Above all, the objectives of this document are to:

- Encourage good urban design, landscape design and architecture.
- Improve the quality and performance of existing and new residential areas.
- Promote safe, attractive, pedestrian-focused residential layouts.
- Encourage a good mix of well-designed homes.
- Promote the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, and local distinctiveness and character in general.
- Encourage biodiversity.
- Minimise the environmental impacts of new housing.
- Encourage sustainable development.

Policy Framework

1.4 This Residential Backland Development Supplementary Planning Document provides further policy guidance relating to the Solihull Local Plan (2013) (SLP), in particular P15 - Securing Design Quality, P14 - Amenity, P7 - Accessibility and Ease of Access, and P5 - Provision of Land for Housing. The guidance should also be read in conjunction with the New Housing in Context Supplementary Planning Guidance, which provides wider advice on how the Council implements its housing and environmental policies with regards to density, design and local distinctiveness. This SPD is therefore a companion guide to the Housing in Context SPG. It is envisaged that these local policies and guidance will be updated by the current Local Plan Review. It is likely that the New Housing in Context SPG and this guidance will be combined during that process.

1.5 As a starting point, any proposal for backland development must demonstrate that the scheme complies with Policy P5 - Provision of Land for Housing of the SLP. Amongst other criteria, this policy expects any development for housing to be located in an accessible location and to contribute to meeting identified Borough-wide housing needs, as well as enhancing local character and distinctiveness. Accessibility is tested against Policy P7 of the SLP which describes accessibility criteria.

1.6 By setting out local criteria for good design in the context of backland development, this guidance aims to implement the objectives of national policy and guidance, whilst linking back to Policy P15 - Securing Quality Design. In particular, relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF), such as Section 11 - Making effective use of land and Section 12 - Achieving well designed places, as well as those set out in the Government's National Design Guide (2019). The SPD aims to support the objectives and relevant policies of Neighbourhood Plans.

Backland definition and scope of guidance

1.7 'Backland' can usually be defined as development on land behind the rear building line of existing residential or other development, and is usually on land that is formally used as gardens, or is partially enclosed by gardens. It also often includes sites such as garage courts, small commercial courtyards, etc. Frequently, backland proposals also involve infill development in the form of frontage redevelopment, e.g. proposing to replace one or more buildings on the street frontage to create access into a backland site. Proposed backland development sites may be found by more than one street. In such cases, it is important that reference is also made to the adopted New Housing in Context SPG for detailed expectations regarding the design of new developments in existing street frontages and their impact on the existing streetscene. This is in addition to the design criteria set out in this guide.

Benefits of backland development and negative impacts to be avoided

1.8 In areas of low density and suburban locations, backland and other infill development, if managed properly, can enhance places and bring benefits by providing new homes for people of all ages, and homes of different sizes, adding to architectural quality, streetscape variety, distinctiveness, and a finer urban street grain including new walkable and/or street connections in car-based neighbourhoods. Figure 1.3 and 1.5 provide illustrative examples of such points.

1.9 If poorly designed, such development can result in piecemeal development, over-urbanisation and over-development of backland areas, and ineffective land use by introducing large amounts of new traffic surfaces, proliferation of access drives, loss of green and garden space, and poor quality public realm on the main street frontage, in return for a small gain in residential or dwelling numbers. This is not a return that supports the delivery of quality place-making.

Sites and proposals not considered suitable for backland development

1.10 An analysis of site character and context is essential in determining what form of, or whether, development may be appropriate. The local distinctiveness and typology data set out in paragraph 3.10 and Appendix 1 of the New Housing in Context SPG provide a good starting point to this process. Not all backland sites will be suitable, and there will be no presumption that residential backland proposals constitute 'sustainable' development because they meet an identified housing need, unless they also meet the design criteria outlined in this guide.

1.11 Initial site assembly considerations and location will play an essential role.

1.12 The following situations will not be considered suitable and are likely to be refused at planning application stage, with illustrative examples found at Figures 1 and 2 below:

- Piecemeal development which would prevent future, more comprehensive development and connections. Given the value of backland sites in contributing to the delivery of the Borough's supply of housing land, a development should not be delivered in a piecemeal manner.
- Proposals that would result in over-development of the site in light of guidance in this document.
- Proposals that would create disproportionate amounts of new traffic and hard surfaces in relation to the amount of living, garden and amenity space and/or number of dwellings to be provided.
- Proposals that would create isolated development at the end of a long driveway over existing gardens, and/or exposure of substantial length building sides and rear garden boundaries (see Figure 2.3).
- Proposals that would replace distinctive frontage buildings with buildings of poorer design and architectural quality.
- Proposals that would result in an unacceptable proliferation of closely spaced access junctions and/or vehicle crossovers to the detriment of the convenience of pedestrian and cycle movement along the main street frontage, or harm visual and streetscape quality.
- Proposals that would have access arrangements that are detrimental to highway safety.
- Proposals which are located or laid out in ways likely to prejudice the long-term survival of established high value back garden boundary vegetation and tree cover.
- Proposals considered to be an under-provision of a site. Applicants must not intentionally circumvent the affordable housing provisions of the Solihull Local Plan and/or the NPPF by delivering a smaller scheme or number of dwellings where a site could be well designed to deliver more.

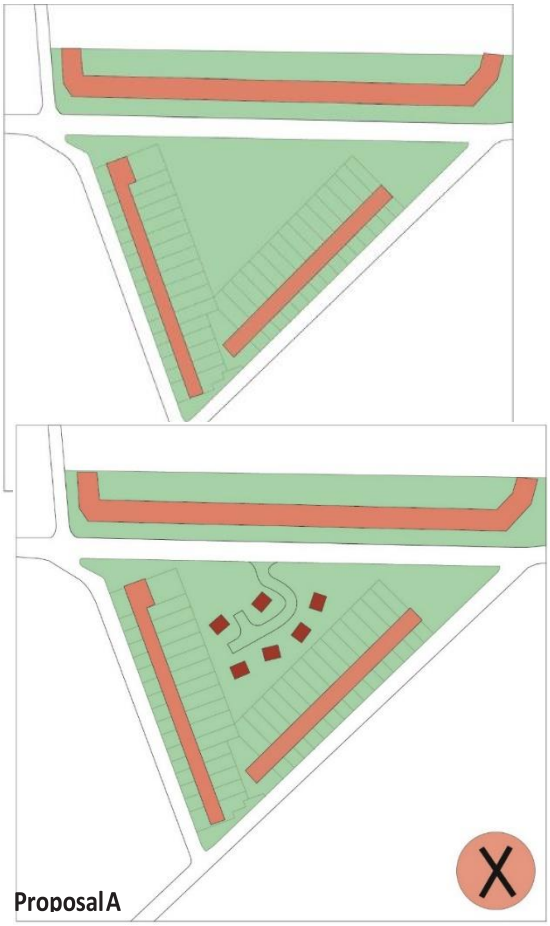


Figure 1.1 (left top) Site as existing: Existing site in typical suburban street block

Figure 1.2 Proposal A (left middle): Unacceptable development

Inward looking cul-de-sac:

- Lack of active frontage or connection with the existing neighbourhood and street block.
- Proposal fails to observe the urban block's interior and exterior space functions.
- Fragmentation of private rear garden and connected green infrastructure in inner of the block; layout prejudicing retention of established rear garden boundary vegetation.
- Increased impacts on existing neighbouring gardens and/or dwellings.
- Failure to optimise land use or enhance residential and neighbourhood quality and character, ineffective in terms of site capacity.
- Layout requiring large amount of new traffic and access surface per dwelling.
- Piecemeal urban development that would be refused.

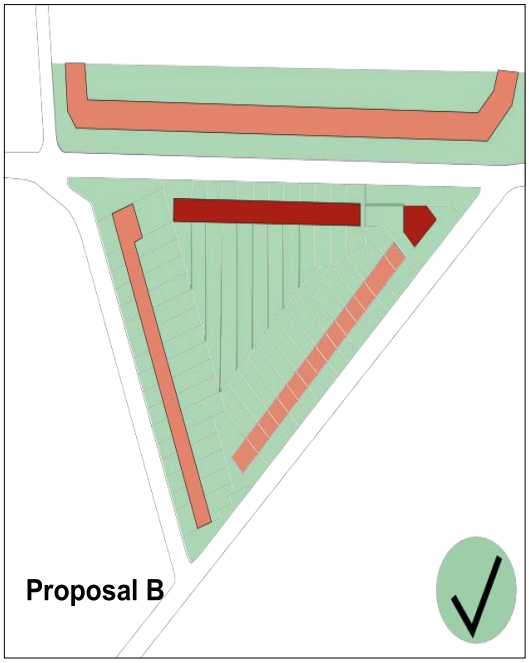


Figure 1.3 Proposal B (left bottom): Positive development following perimeter block design:

- Outward looking frontage connected into neighbourhood.
- Private, tranquil garden spaces to rear in the inner of the urban street block.
- Layout enabling retention of existing mature garden boundary vegetation.
- Effective land use, potential for corner development adding architectural character, distinctiveness and mixed uses.
- Access and parking functions located at the front do not disturb the rear, private realm of development or neighbours, and minimise need for new traffic and access surfaces. Coherent urban development will be supported.

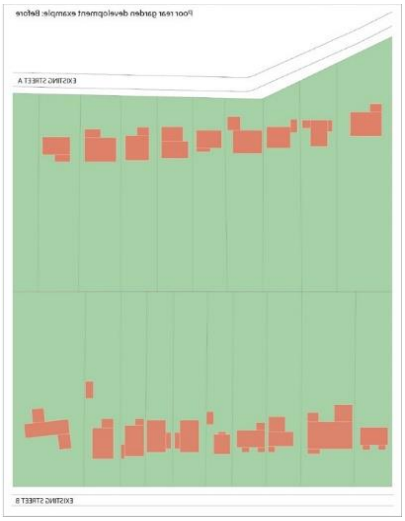


Figure 1.4 (left top) Site as existing:

Existing suburban street block of free standing houses and long rear gardens

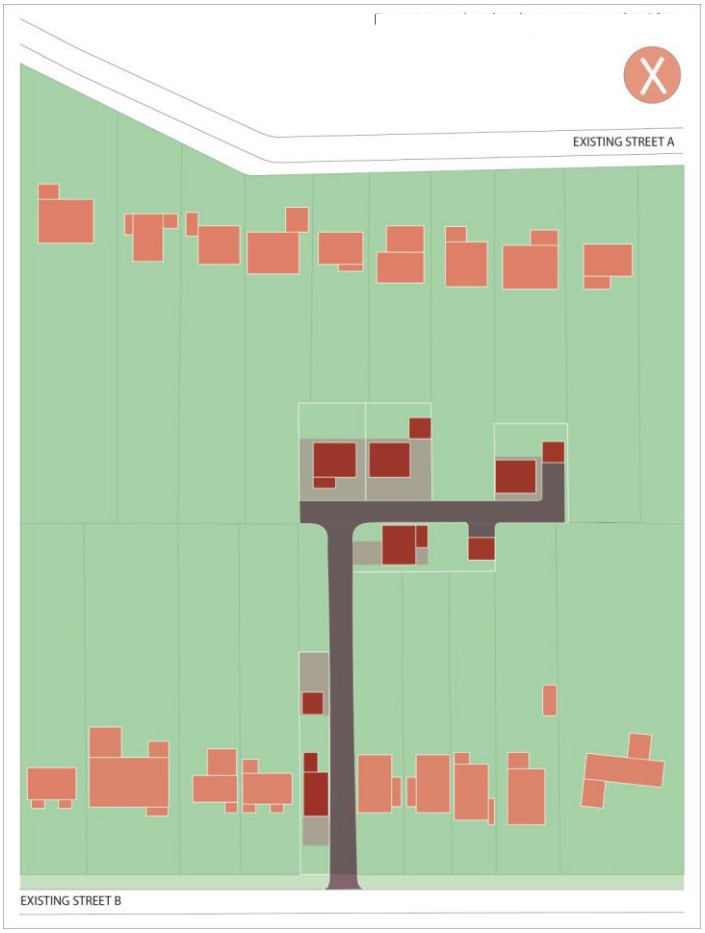


Figure 1.5 (right top):

Same location after development which is an example of an unacceptable rear garden development.

An example of an unacceptable proposal displaying many of the negative qualities and characteristics to be avoided in rear garden development (see p.6):

- Long driveway presenting security and amenity issues for existing neighbours; unattractive visual exposure of garden fences, disproportionately large amount of access and traffic space per dwelling, ineffective land use.
- Viewed from the street, the development is disconnected, isolated, and not part of the street grid.
- Subdivision of frontage plot to enable creation of access to the rear out of the same frontage property, resulting in inappropriately narrow frontage plot and built footprint.
- The development has been located deep into the rear gardens around the existing rear garden boundaries. This is likely to prejudice the retention of established back boundary vegetation unnecessarily. Given the existing garden lengths, development could be located closer to the frontage.
- Small dwelling gain, unsustainable land use where more comprehensive, connected and attractive, outward-facing development would be possible. For example, in the form of a new secondary lane or mews fronted by dwellings, and/or courtyard arrangement building on perimeter block principles (at a smaller scale than the frontage street perimeter block - see figures further below).

Site entrance arrangements to be avoided:

Figure 2.1 (left top): tarmacadam drive into site, enclosed by walls and timber fencing:

- Unattractive tunnel effect created by frontage redevelopment almost up to site boundaries.
- Lack of space for planting either side of boundary and poor detailing of driveway and footpath (N.B. the minimum width of the driveway is not an issue and potentially positive, but the new, large footprint frontage properties extending right onto their site boundaries is).
- Frontage redevelopment not designed as corner buildings turning into the site entrance.

Figures 2.1 (left top) and 2.2 (right top): Excessive hardstanding, tunnelling effect, lacking landscaping.

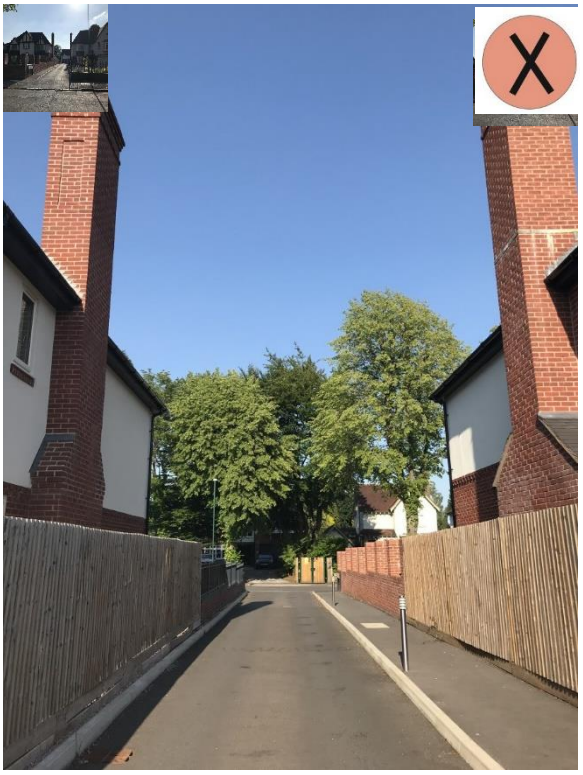


Figure 2.2 (right top): An example of a site access that is not cohesive in the local neighbourhood and street scene. Exposure of substantial length building sides and rear garden boundaries.

Figure 2.3 (right bottom): looking out to main street frontage from the rear backland development. The development does not appear to be a part of the local neighbourhood or street block.

Figure 2.3 (above): Lack of cohesion.

Figure 2.4 (above): Poor use of materials, creating an unwelcome entrance to the development.

Design Process

General Design Requirements

2.1 It is often very difficult to design a satisfactory form of backland development, due to issues of scale, access, overlooking and separation distances. Removal of existing mature trees is often proposed, which can also have negative impacts on an area's character. These developments are mainly planned in existing residential areas, where residents and neighbours enjoy a certain level of amenity. In some instances, a more satisfactory form of development can be achieved by packaging a number of land parcels together to develop a more appropriate scheme.

2.2 Backland sites are generally landlocked, such as by rear gardens and private open space. Due to its nature, backland development will largely be out of view, but nevertheless should not dominate the frontage property, whilst still being partly visible so that people can find it.

2.3 The above, however, cannot be an excuse for poor design. Designers should demonstrate backland development is subservient (i.e. smaller in size, massing and scale) to the frontage properties. Topography and significant levels differences need to be taken into account to ensure backland development is subservient to neighbouring dwellings that have a primary road frontage. Backland development, particularly in mature suburbs, should also seek to maximise the inclusion of natural and landscape features when compared to the provision of hard surfacing and built development; Figure 3 below provides a good example of this. Development will also require particular care in its design and layout to avoid conflict with neighbouring residential development. Backland development should be designed to discourage crime and anti-social behaviour, for example, by natural surveillance of access drives. Development should aim to create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion, in accordance with Secured by Design. This design process requires explanation through the application submission documents and reference back to the relevant Typology Data set out in Appendix 1 of the New Housing in Context SPG. The following design also be taken into account:

Figure 3 (right bottom) Good example of subservience in a backland development:

- This example of a residential backland development succeeds in appearing subservient from the street frontage.
- This site entrance however is not very well overlooked or marked by the frontage architecture, which does not create a corner that 'turns into' the development at the rear.

Detailed Design Principles

2.4 As well as the requirement to take into account the well-established Typology Data from the adopted New Housing in Context SPG, the following design principles should be considered at an early stage (Figure 6 on page 14 brings together the design concepts described below:

Density and Character

2.5 The density of backland development will vary according to a site's character, context, dwellings required in an area, future adjoining development potential, and the design and layout of proposals. Standard dwelling density ranges will not be applied, as development objectives are to retain and create high quality, green, suburban residential developments and neighbourhoods with a high 'place quality', minimising hard surfaces, rather than adhering to dwelling density prescriptions.

2.6 The proportion of development on any backland site will follow the spatial and design parameters summarised in this guidance. These parameters include subservient built typologies and/or form, footprints, heights and massing; building separation distances; amenity space and green infrastructure; sustainable drainage and permeable surfaces. Figure 4 shows application of such design.

2.7 These parameters will be applied and assessed to ensure that new backland development respects the proportions of the built and natural environment considered characteristic of high quality residential environments. Figure 4 provides visual examples of this.

Site Assembly

2.8 Where sites present the potential to be developed to achieve comprehensive development in conjunction with neighbouring plots, proposals should seek to bring sites forward collaboratively. If this is not the case, applicants will be expected to demonstrate that they have explored the possibility of doing so. Figure 5 gives some examples of differing site assembly techniques.

2.9 It may be possible to assemble sufficient land from a number of adjoining rear gardens to enable a small group of houses to be developed. In such situation, a small cul-de-sac or courtyard could achieve an acceptable separation between public and private space, and safeguard against unwanted overlooking. Detailed assessment will still need to be made as to whether the new development will have any significant detrimental impacts upon the amenity of neighbouring properties, including their private amenity space, and that the access to the cul-de-sac will not impact negatively upon the character of an existing street. In particularly sensitive areas, such as conservation areas, the principle of backland cul-de-sac development may be resisted, particularly where this type of layout is not a common characteristic of the area.

Figure 4 Built form and layout - illustrations and diagrams:

Figure 4.1 (below):

- Small scale intensification in low density (suburban) neighbourhoods identified as capable of accommodating new housing ('gentle densification').
- Potential new connections, new and diversification of existing housing supply, more walkable neighbourhoods.

Source: Evolution of low density suburbs: through frontage redevelopments and secondary, subservient development lanes through former backlands (Urban Design Journal Issue 145 (2018)).

Figure 4.2 (below): An area of focussed intensification:

Figure 5 Potential design techniques to create through connections and permeability across sites:

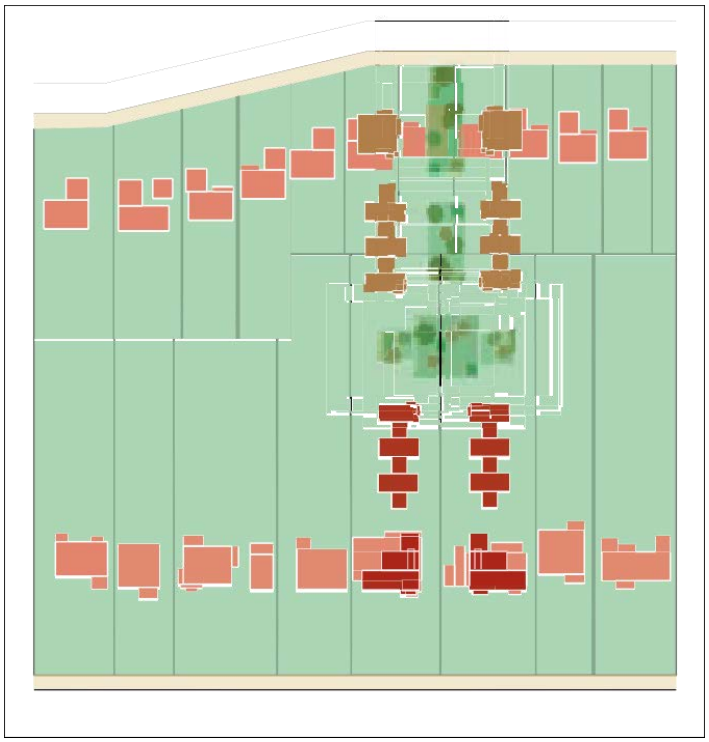


Figure 5.1 (left): Diagram with two phased double rows linked by a central green space to provide quality public realm.

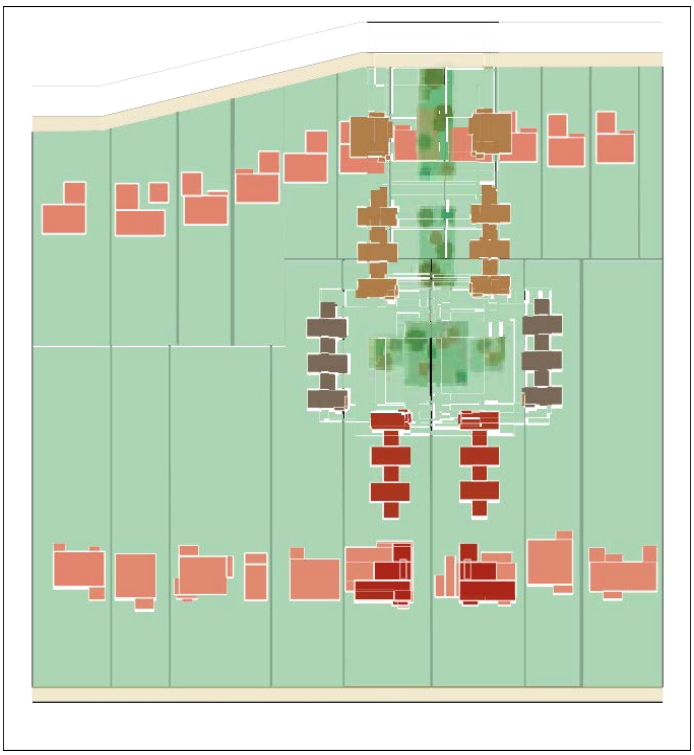


Figure 5.2 below Additional phase of development leading to a staggered double row. The third grey phase would not affect the houses of the contributing two properties plots, leaving frontage/ historic streetscene intact and retain generous rear gardens for the existing properties.

Application of backland design criteria

- Neighbouring sites brought forward together to achieve coherent development.
- Frontage redevelopment follows building lines, frontage treatment, and the larger built format of the existing street frontage.
- Dwellings leading into the site designed to be subservient to the frontage and to cause minimal visual impact upon adjacent gardens by stepping of heights and footprints.
- Smaller built footprints, scale, massing (subservience) in the inner of the site allows for mix of dwelling sizes, including dwellings for smaller households.
- Layout retains potential for new future connections and pedestrian links (such as to the street above) and for more comprehensive future development.
- Development laid out to be public and street-facing and legibly, i.e. visibly connected into the neighbourhood.
- Proposed new rear gardens adjoin neighbouring gardens, therefore minimum visual exposure of rear garden fences, both new and existing and minimum security impact upon existing neighbouring properties.
- All dwellings and plots deigned to provide useable rear and/or side garden space of at least the same size as the built footprint. Buildings are not to cover more than one third of the plot.
- Street space designed as public space, including potential for natural and end vista or other focal point(s).
- Minimum extent of new traffic surface per property; minimum required driveway width.

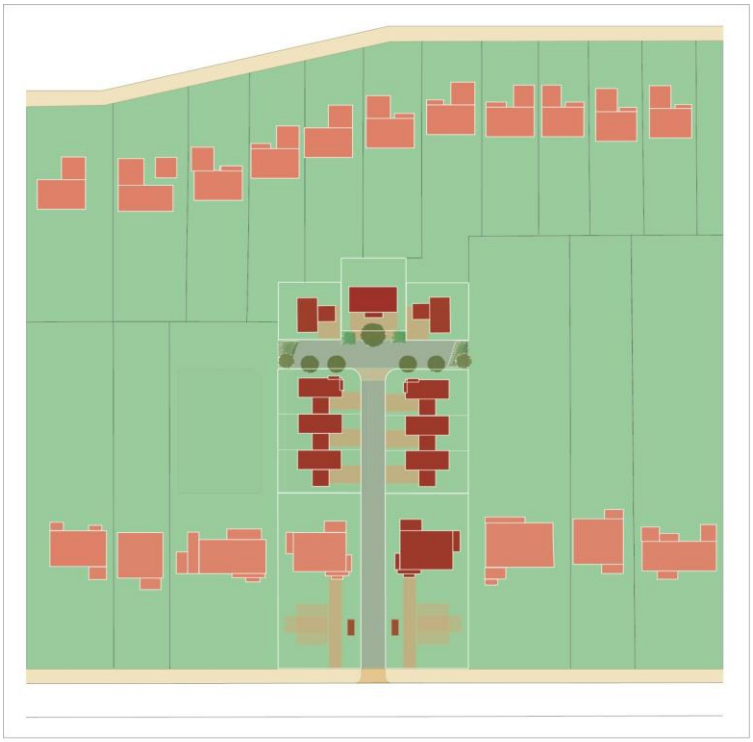


Figure 6.1 (right top): Retaining distinctive frontage building as corner feature, marking entrance.

Figure 6.2 (right bottom): Width of frontage plots offers redevelopment opportunity for modest low-rise apartments as double corner feature, marking new street entrance.

Built form and layout

2.10 In order to retain frontage street character, and avoid visual intrusion or overbearing impact upon existing neighbours and neighbourhoods, backland development should be a subservient form of development. Subservience can be achieved through proposals of a lower height than the existing street frontage or predominant building height, articulated massing, and smaller footprint. This will depend upon the context of each site; Figure 7 demonstrates such points.

2.11 The variation (by 'stepping') of the height and/or footprint of proposals relative to existing neighbouring development can help to retain a sense of openness for existing residents and within the backland development itself, maintaining appropriate residential amenity levels.

2.12 The relationship between the rear elevations of a proposal and existing or other new development is primarily concerned with maintaining privacy. Back-to-back separation distance between habitable rooms in main/original elevations should follow the generally applied 22m guidance. To avoid overlooking issues, layouts may be adjusted to turn away from site boundaries and not have direct back-to-back relationships. The topography of the land may mean that separation distances need to be increased, i.e. if there is a significant levels difference , this might also impact on issues of subservience. In this way, topography may have an impact on the conservation and enhancement of the character of an area. The extent and acceptability of this impact will have to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

2.13 Whilst it is anticipated that the architectural style, materials and character of a proposal will generally reflect those aspects of its existing surroundings, as a subservient form of development compared to existing buildings, backland development may offer opportunities to distinguish itself from street-facing development through the use of innovation and contemporary design. This can enhance character in certain circumstances. Advice on the appropriate approach to innovation and contemporary design is already provided in Section 5 of the adopted New Housing in Context SPG and the NPPF. It is critically important that the context of the proposal is understood and respected if designs of this type are to be taken forward.

2.14 Where frontages are proposed for redevelopment in association with backland development, choices of site, site shape, layouts and design will be encouraged that allow for the creation of positive corner features at site entrances (ideally on both sides of any proposed new access drives), and development arranged to face out onto any new access driveway into the site.

Built form, typologies, backland layouts and arrangements:

Figure 7.1 (left top)

Figure 7.2 (right top)

Figure 7.3 (left middle)

Figure 7.1: Compact, subservient building form in backland development makes effective use of land and adds to local housing size and mix by providing smaller dwellings.

Figure 7.2: The same development looking out to the larger, free standing properties on the main frontage. The new development is clearly linked into the neighbourhood and visible through the narrow side street coming off the main street.

Figure 7.3: Same development showing gated shared open space at the end of the development drive, in addition to private rear gardens.

Figure 7.4 (right bottom)

Figure 7.4: Backland development arranged around a loose Courtyard, successful in retaining much of the existing 'garden character' on the spacious site.

External Space and Green Infrastructure

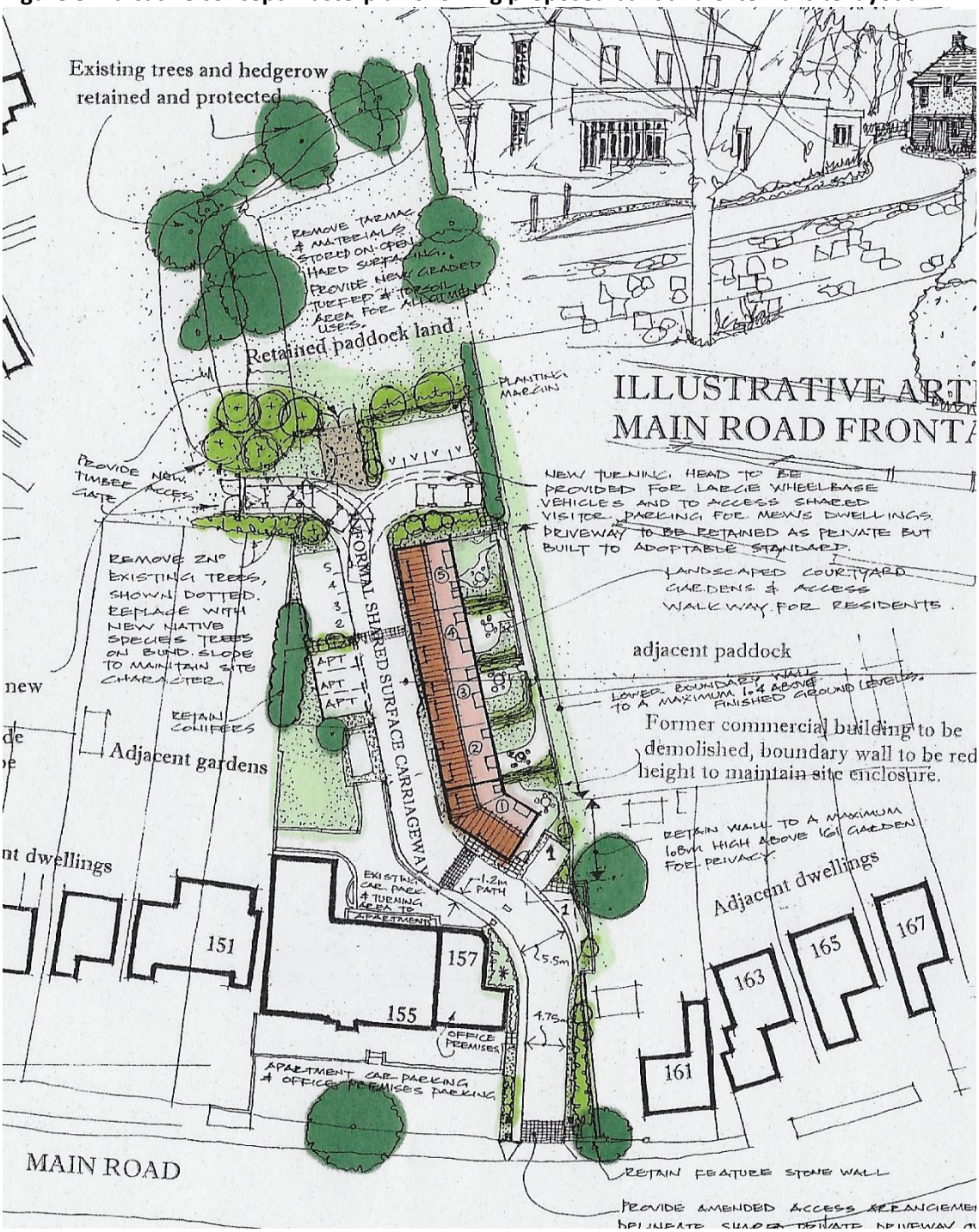
2.15 The majority of the Borough's settlements are distinguished by having mature soft landscape features and reasonable levels of external amenity space. It is therefore expected that backland development proposals are supported by a thorough analysis and plan showing:

- Proposed buildings, private and shared amenity space.
- Retained and proposed new vegetation.
- Access and any surface parking and its arrangement.
- Other hard and soft landscape and external works elements, such as SUDS.
- The proposed transition/interface, or cross-over joining the scheme with the existing street frontage.
- Any proposed public realm frontage improvements as part of the scheme.
- Boundary treatments and provision for upgrading of, or landscaping to, exposed poor quality, existing site boundaries or back garden fences.

2.16 The above analysis should be provided on a site layout plan and should show the proposed arrangement of all landscaping, and how it relates to the proposed built form. The landscape design should incorporate an appropriate range of vegetation and permeable, soft surfaces, such as: a mixture of trees, hedges, shrubs, planted borders; water features; wildlife areas; etc.

2.17 Layouts that do not provide a variety of vegetation will not be acceptable, i.e. not grass on its own. This is also the case for plans that show unrealistic site layouts and dimensions, such as retained mature trees in close proximity to built form; trees overshadowing proposed gardens and buildings; proposed replacement tree planting with inadequate space for long-term tree growth; etc. Design concept and layout plans should make spatial provision for the retention of landscape features, in accordance with BS5837 from the initial site planning stage. Figure 9 on page 18 shows good examples of existing landscape features incorporated into new backland development schemes.

Figure 8 Indicative concept masterplan showing proposed built and external site layout



The above plan includes:

- Hard surfaced and permeable surface areas
- Kerbs, steps and walls
- Boundary treatments
- Other external treatments
- Other external structures, such as bin and cycle storage
- Existing vegetation

Figure 9 Integration of existing mature trees and other green infrastructure into developments, new and connected green infrastructure

Figure 9.1 (left top):

Existing and new vegetation incorporated into backland scheme that succeeds in retaining 'garden character' within the development, as well as for views from existing neighbouring gardens and dwellings.

Figure 9.2 (left bottom)

Integration of existing natural feature (channel) on the right as a linear green verge that separates of house fronts from the street, provides attractive entrances to dwellings, as well as some natural screening of cars parked in front.

2.18 Backland development and proposed new build footprints must not result in unacceptably small rear gardens for existing or proposed properties. Although garden sizes will to an extent be determined by the back-to-back separation distance between new and existing neighbouring development (which may need to be increased due to topography/a significant levels difference), developments will be expected to meet the following criteria to ensure adequate private and/or shared garden and amenity space are provided and/or retained:

- An individual house, communal or apartment building should not normally cover more than one third of its plot,
- The absolute minimum useable rear garden areas (excluding parking and turning areas) should be at least the same size as the footprint of the property, and
- For the property/properties contributing land to a proposed backland development, the existing rear garden area to be retained should have a minimum length of 11m and no less than half or 200sqm (whichever is the smaller).

2.19 In exceptional cases, the above minimum spatial requirements regarding plot coverage and/or rear garden area may be relaxed within a proposed backland development. This may apply where:

- Sites could be vulnerable to anti-social behaviour, such as disused garages or commercial sites, are being developed for housing; or where
- Development is proposed on a landlocked site constrained by existing physical features (walls, adjacent buildings, high value vegetation or other natural features) and the proposal is for a high quality bespoke design, e.g. a small, high quality self-build development, small terrace, cottage, mixed work/residential, or another subservient, compact form of development.

2.20 Figure 10 provides a layout plan that brings the above points together. The plan demonstrates how a quality backland development scheme may be designed, combining well-proportioned dwelling footprints, gardens sizes and space around buildings.

Figure 10 Example of backland development footprints, garden and other space around buildings

Figure 10: backland development example illustrating maximum development potential in its street and site context, meeting garden and green space requirements around new buildings.

Design of private and shared outdoor amenity space

2.21 Outdoor amenity space should provide outlook from habitable rooms and be directly accessible from the individual dwelling. Where the latter is not possible, applicants will need to demonstrate this and provide shared outdoor amenity space instead; Figure 11 provides a series of examples of this.

2.22 Where a shared outdoor amenity space is provided instead of directly accessible private outdoor amenity space, e.g. in the case of apartment development, a large area of shared space, along with a series of semi-private/semi-defensible spaces allocated to ground floor units with direct access should be provided. These should be open to the shared areas and may be bordered by low hedges and shrubs, but should not be divided from the garden areas with fences or high hedges.

2.23 In addition to private/shared outdoor amenity space in rear gardens, developments should provide useable outdoor space, and space for other social interaction as part of development's shared, street and access space. To achieve this, the quality of access ways and other public or semi-private areas should be pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly, and be designed to encourage low traffic speeds. Buildings should also be sited to encourage natural surveillance of these spaces from adjacent properties; Figure 12.2 on page 25 provides such an example.

Biodiversity, Urban Greening, Ecological and SUDS effective surfaces

2.24 The landscape proposals associated with backland development should support and enhance biodiversity on each individual site, ideally through the retention of existing trees and vegetation deemed to be of ecological importance, including mature back garden boundary and frontage vegetation. The provision of quality new landscaping will also be expected.

2.25 In addition to such landscape provision on the site itself, biodiversity off-setting may be required to achieve the overall net biodiversity gain required by the NPPF and any subsequent national and/or local requirements.

2.26 Sustainable Urban Drainage is promoted and hard surfaces and access drives should benefit from permeable surfaces such as gravel, stone and pavers, or even permeable concrete and asphalt. These materials are environmentally friendly and will help considerably with reducing surface water run-off rates and water quality control.

Figure 11 Diagram of typical private and shared rear garden space arrangement

Figure 11.1 (left top)

Figure 11.2 (right top)

Figures 11.1 and 11.2 provide examples showing transitions from private or semi-private rear garden spaces of house or ground floor apartment units to a shared rear garden or courtyard. Private garden boundaries are designed to retain some visual permeability.

Figure 11.3 (left bottom): Backland development allowing space around buildings, giving the development a 'garden character'. Driveway given natural surveillance by windows.

Figure 11.4 (right bottom): Dwellings set back from drive, with greening around buildings. Street and boundary materials emphasise pedestrian character, vegetation, and ensure a good proportion of permeable and natural surfaces.

Access and Parking

Access design to backland, driveways, entrances, coherent development

2.27 Vehicle access to a backland residential development can be problematic. Access by foot or by vehicle should not cause adverse amenity effects upon neighbouring dwellings. Access arrangements that will cause significant nuisance to these dwellings, or cause safety problems to the existing road network will be resisted. Access to the site for emergency vehicles and refuse collection can also cause problems. The maximum refuse bin drag distance should be no more than 30m.

2.28 Adequate turning circles and passing points may be required dependent upon the size of development. Further guidance on this topic can be found in highway design guidance, produced by the Council's Highways team[1].

2.29 Backland development should not lead to inadequate provision for car parking, or allow car parking to have negative effects upon the character of the local area. This includes the level and disposition of parking provision for both the proposed development and any revised provision associated with 'host' properties that provides land for the development. Car parking provision should be compliant with the NPPF and in accordance with Policy P8 of the Solihull Local Plan an evidence based approach in forecasting parking demand and servicing provision should provide first principles to car parking allocation.

2.30 Vehicular access needs to be of a scale and appearance that is acceptable in the context of the local street scene; Figure 12.1 demonstrates this point. Overly wide entrances that would have a harmful impact on the street scene will not be acceptable. Driveways and entrances should be designed to prioritise pedestrian and cycle movement and safety. This will generally mean limiting the number of vehicular access points to control vehicle flow, and driveways to rear garden development sharing the same entrance as the development to the front. Excessive lengths of traffic surface are to be avoided and hard surfaces minimised. Access paths or drives into backland sites should not be designed to prevent future connections into neighbouring sites.

2.31 Shared surface access into a backland may be acceptable and encouraged in some schemes, 'tight knit' historic town centre contexts, and in reduced (or zero) car parking schemes. Alternatively, clearly designated, connected pedestrian path/priority into the site and dwelling entrances should be provided.

[1] https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Roads-pavements-and-streetcare/Roads-on-new-developments-highway-adoptions-and-changes-to-the-highway-network

Figure 12.1 (above): The scale and appearance of this new access into a backland development is sympathetic to its context. The entrance is well marked, but not over-engineered or unnecessarily wide. Rather than using prominent highway kerbs and tarmacadam, the driveway and edging materials create a pedestrian character for both entrance and driveway. The continuous, flush footway along the frontage signals to drivers a need to give way to pedestrians when entering or exiting. The entrance design makes clear that this is a secondary, or 'subservient' side street off the main frontage street. The backland buildings are visibly located and face out onto the main frontage, resulting in a positive connection with the existing street and neighbourhood.

N.B. The use of visual entrance markers such as gate posts (or other features also acting as unobtrusive traffic calming measures) is considered successful, but the use of 'residents-only' street entrance gates is not supported by this guidance.

Figure 12.2 (left): Street designed to prioritise pedestrians with a focus on social interaction and play.

Being located away from the main road frontages and through traffic, backland streets provide an opportunity for design and use as safe public spaces and pedestrian movement routes, benefitting new and existing residents and neighbourhoods.

2.32 Driveways and new streets should be designed to limit traffic speeds up to 15mph. This can be achieved through limiting forward visibility, tightening corner radii, landscape measures, and street space reallocation; a successful example of these design tools is shown at Figure 13. There should be an emphasis on streets, driveways, and any parking courts designed as public open space, rather than dominated by the demands of vehicles.

2.33 Positive views into the site and at the end of any driveways should be created using arrangements of buildings, planting and retained vegetation to make the development readable from the street frontage, and integrate it into its neighbourhood. Layouts should seek to avoid clear views of road infrastructure and accesses be designed as active street space, ideally with natural surveillance from both sides of the access path or driveway. Driveways and footpaths should be set away from exposed garden boundaries to allow for new planting and/or retention of existing vegetation. A minimum of 0.75-1m separation should be used as a guide.

2.34 Electric car charging points should be provided in accordance with local and national policy, with particular regard to Policy P9 of the Local Plan Review.

Figure 13 (left bottom):
This development is successful in creating an end vista and in allowing enough space for green verges and vegetation along the access drive, thereby avoiding a long, narrow access channel into the site.

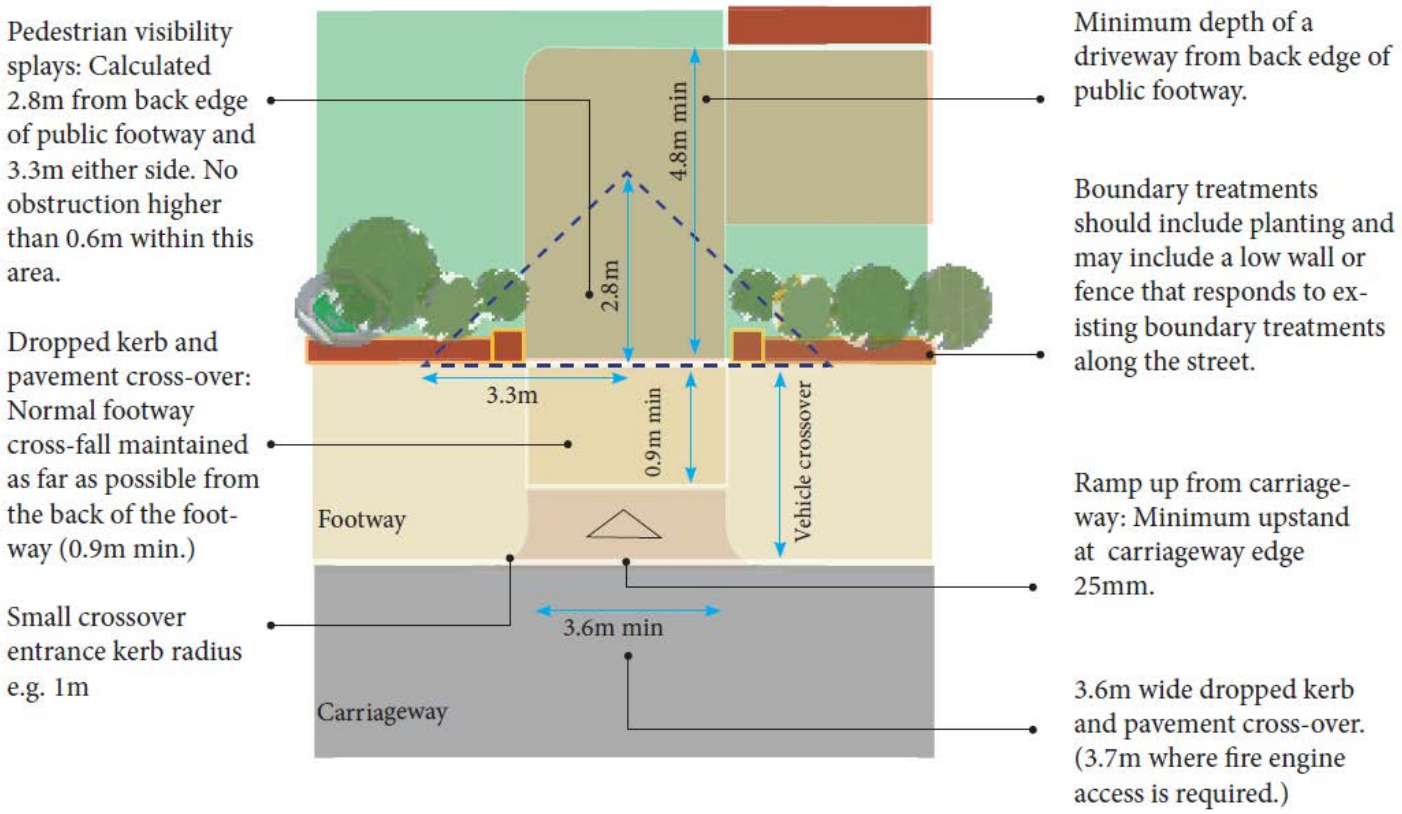
The curvature of the driveway helps to limit traffic speed.

Entrances, cross-overs and front boundary treatments

2.35 Entrances to new developments should be clearly marked with gate posts, planting or a built boundary treatment that responds to the existing street scene, dwellings and street scale. Planting along the front boundary will normally be required, as well as a pedestrian-focussed, high quality cross-over design. Gated developments will not be acceptable. This will need to be considered carefully, early in the planning stages of a project, to avoid conflict with required visibility splays at the access point onto the existing highway. Further guidance on this is provided in the highway design guidance produced by the Council's Highways team.

2.36 Figure 14 illustrates how highway safety, considerations for site access, pedestrian visibility splays as well as an appropriate front boundary treatment:

Figure 14 Street design and access
Requirements for entrances and boundary treatments, including vehicle cross-over, footway, public realm and streetscape consideration based on the Manual for Streets.



Car parking design, layout and provision

2.37 Car parking should be effectively incorporated into the design of the development. Backland development may utilise a courtyard arrangement, where car parking can be concealed between built form, or with garages introduced at ground floor level with accommodation above. Proposals which create car-dominated frontages should generally be avoided. Any frontage/shared parking should be screened with planting between and around bays, to minimise impact upon the street scene and neighbouring properties.

2.38 Car parking to be accommodated in forecourts facing onto the street will only be accepted up to a quantum that is not considered to impact negatively on the street scene, and must be set back from the front edge of the plot by at least 0.75m to provide for a boundary treatment (wall, fence, hedge), plus planting (hedge, border, mature trees) to reduce visual impact.

2.39 With regard to parking space dimensions, if a parking space is bound along one side (i.e. by a wall, hedge, etc), then the space is required to measure at least 3m wide. If the space is bound on both sides, then it is required to measure at least 3.5m in width. Garages should have internal dimensions of at least 3.5m wide x 6m long to allow vehicles doors to fully open, and allow space within the garage for storage areas and pedestrian movement around the car. Further guidance on parking spaces is provided in highway design guidance produced by the Council's Highways team[2]. Car parking should also be compliant with the Parking Standards SPD and NPPF.

2.40 A quantum of less than SMBC's minimum car parking may be accepted or encouraged in exceptional cases in highly sustainable locations, such as local centres, and where small, landlocked sites are highly constrained by existing physical features and proposals require high quality, bespoke design solutions. For example, a small self-build, mews, cottage, or similar development.

2.41 Figures 15 and 16 provide positive and negative examples of car parking provision. Poor examples clearly show excessive areas of hardstanding or car dominated frontages, whilst successful examples, shown in Figures 15 and 16 demonstrate how the use of landscaping helps to successfully integrate car parking into a development, without dominating the public realm.

[2] https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Roads-pavements-and-streetcare/Roads-on-new-developments-highway-adoptions-and-changes-to-the-highway-network

Figure 15 Examples of forecourt car parking design on main street frontage

Figure 15.1 (top): Frontage redevelopment with hard surface-dominated parking forecourt. Although the scheme retains some front boundary vegetation and provides small pockets of new planting around the forecourt perimeter, the overall impression is of extensive amounts of hard surface.

Figure 15.2 (bottom): Example of frontage redevelopment that successfully screens and breaks views of cars parked in the forecourt from the street, through retention of mature tree, visually permeable, low-rise boundary wall, and new hedge planting behind.

Figure 16 Car parking design in backland courtyards, streets and driveways

Figure 16.1 (top left):
Access drive designed with parking located in front of dwellings and screened with robust shrub planting and small trees. Planting is kept low to maintain visibility along the street and towards the front doors.

Figure 16.2 (left middle):
Development using a combination of design devices to reduce the impact of parked cars within the development and building frontages. This includes garages, concealment of parked cars between buildings, and frontage parking bays separated by soft areas between properties/and bays with ample space for more substantial planting (trees, shrubs, low hedges) as in the Figure above.

Figure 16.3 (left bottom)
The same development as above viewed from the adjacent public space. Driveway and parked cars have been successfully screened from the public space by a low, visually permeable fence and hedge planting. This also acts as an informal boundary that separates the public space/public realm from the development, without preventing natural surveillance.

Figure 16.4 (left top):

This scheme makes provision for planting around parking areas, but lacks overall visual clarity and consistency in its built, spatial and movement arrangement. A parked car dominates the street corner and may, given the lack of footpath provision, contribute to conflicts between car and pedestrian movement.

Figure 16.5 (left middle):
Courtyard arrangement consisting almost entirely of vehicle access and parking surface. Dwelling fronts are dominated by parked cars. The small areas designated for planting are inadequate, and their location in the layout is unable to mitigate the car-dominated character of the development.

Figure 16.6 (left bottom): Parking on-plot: mix of garage, forecourt parking and parking to sides between buildings. House forecourts allow equal space for planting. Planting elements such as hedging, plus low fencing designed to screen views of parked cars and access surfaces from public space, whilst allowing for some natural surveillance both ways.

Ancillary storage, buildings and facilities

2.42 N.B. Reference to further guidance on Refuse and Emergency and service vehicle access is contained within the highway design guidance[3] produced by the Council's Highways team.

Refuse storage and collection points

2.43 All waste management should be integrated into the design of developments from the outset, and be achieved with minimal impact upon the quality of the public realm and the amenity of neighbouring and future residents. Where possible, waste storage should be at the rear of the dwelling. Where waste is stored at the front of properties, it must be carefully integrated into the frontage and appropriately screened from the highway. Maximum refuse bin drag distances should be 30m. Figure 17 illustrates unacceptable bin storage, as well as providing best practice in incorporating bin storage to dwellings and developments.

2.44 In developments with limited or without access for bin lorries, bin collection points and/or bin stores, where appropriate, should be designed into the scheme and located near the main street frontage to avoid bins obstructing pavements and negatively impacting on the main street frontage's public realm. Waste collection points or shared bin stores should be unobtrusively located near the frontage, and visually designed as an integral part of the proposed built development, its external design and landscape scheme, being integrated, for example, into a scheme's hard and soft boundary design.

Emergency and service access

2.45 Emergency or service vehicle access may be restricted for backland sites. Alternative service requirements should be discussed with the relevant authority at an early stage.

Cycle parking and storage

2.46 Proposals will be supported that incorporate cycle parking in a safe, secure and convenient location within the building envelope. Where this cannot be achieved, cycle parking should be provided in safe, secure, well-lit, conveniently located, weather-proof shelters, unobtrusively located with the setting of the building.

[3] https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Rubbish-and-recycling/Waste-guides

Figure 17 Examples of Bin Stores

Left top and right top: Lack of integrated bin storage resulting in waste bins cluttering entrances, spaces around buildings and general streetscape views.

Left middle: Bin storage at the front of properties is well integrated into the scheme and frontage space design, defining the boundary between the street and house frontages in a visually unobtrusive way.

Right middle: Waste and recycling storage is designed into the development. Views and appearance of bin stores could be softened with site boundary planting.

Left bottom: Scheme with bin storage to rear of dwellings provides small, paved waste bin collection point a in discreet location, accessible from the street frontage to avoid cluttering driveways and footways with bins.

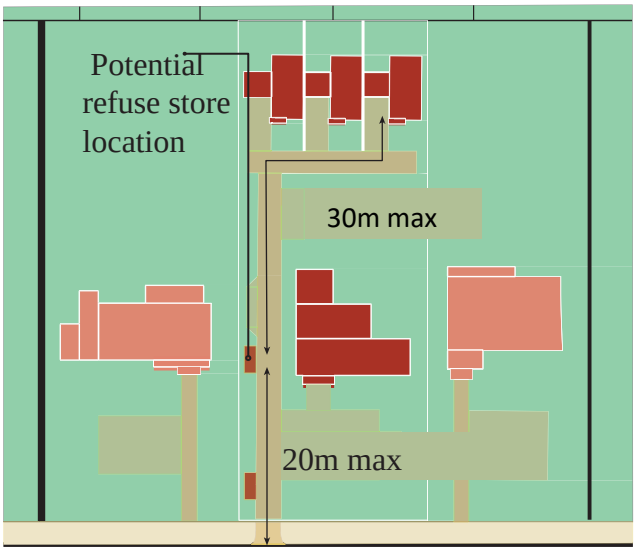


Figure 17.1 (right bottom): potential refuse store locations.

3.0 Design Checklist

3.1 The following key questions can be used by designers as a checklist when considering new backland development. It may be helpful to assess each element of the checklist and confirm whether a proposed scheme offers either a positive, neutral or negative response against each of these areas, providing a narrative associated with each element assessed to explain the designer's response:

- Has there been a robust analysis of the site and surrounding area, as suggested by relevant local policy and guidance? Have the findings been related to the new development?
- Has the scheme been designed in response to the context?
- Does the development affect the plot size and shape, is the scale of development appropriate to the plot size without resulting in over-development?
- Are the buildings positioned within the plot to allow sufficient separation between properties, and avoid problems with overlooking and overshadowing?
- Does the frontage development respect established building lines and heights, property spacing, fenestration materials and patterns, and boundary treatments?
- Will properties have appropriate private amenity areas that benefit from good daylighting and sunlight?
- Is there scope for a more comprehensive scheme?
- Are properties to the rear of the plot subservient, and is there sufficient separation between them?
- Are access points well located and appropriately designed? Will the access point(s) result in harm to the street frontage? Or result in highway safety issues, and unacceptable conflict between users?
- Are parking areas and garages well-designed and discreetly located?
- Does the scheme take opportunities to retain and enhance green infrastructure such as existing trees, hedgerows and any boundary planting?
- Has the scheme been checked against Local Validation Criteria requirements, in particular relating to flood risk, biodiversity and affordable housing?

3.2 It should be noted that this SPD is a supplementary and guidance document, to be used in accordance with other relevant local and national policy and guidance. All schemes are assessed upon their own merits and in terms of the planning balance at the planning application stage.

3.3 Figures provided are for illustrative purposes only and are not drawn to scale.

Image Reference Table

Figure reference	Description of image	Source
1.1	Local suburban street block diagram	Council image
1.2	As above with diagrammatic plan	Council image
1.3	As above changed to show perimeter block proposal instead	Council image
1.4	Typical street block based on area of Dickens Heath	Council image
1.5	As above with diagrammatic plan based on an actual application	Council image
2.1	Example of backland developments in Solihull	Council image
2.2	Example of backland developments in Solihull	Council image
2.3	example of backland development in Dickens Heath area	Council image
2.4	Example of boundary treatment within Shirley South area	Council image
3	Example of backland developments in Solihull	Council image
4.1	Urban Design Journal Issue 145 (2018) article: Middle Housing: the Missing Link	-
4.2	Moray Mews, London N7 (scheme by Peter Barber Architects)	Officer photo
5.1	Example layouts of backland development	Council image
5.2	Example layouts of backland development	Council image
5.3	Example layouts of backland development	Council image
6.1	Example layouts of backland development	Council image
6.2	Example layouts of backland development	Council image
7.1	Examples of development in Meriden	Council image
7.2	Examples of development in Meriden	Council image
7.3	Examples of development in Meriden	Council image
7.4	Example of backland developments in Solihull	Council image
8	Example of application plan for backland development in Meriden	SMBC planning record - https://publicaccess.solihull.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=NRZIDXOEIB900
9.1	Example of backland developments in Solihull	Council image
9.2	Example of infill developments in Solihull	Council image
10	Example diagram illustrating maximum frontage and rear garden development potential in large suburban street block	Council image
11.1	Example from Elephant Park, London SE17	Officer photo
11.2	Example from Elephant Park, London SE17	Officer photo
11.3	Examples of development in Olton	Officer photo
11.4	Examples of development in Olton	Officer photo
12.1	Examples of development in Olton	Officer photo
12.2	Example of infill development Mainz, Germany	Officer photo
13	Example of development in Dorridge	Officer photo
14	Example diagram illustrating street design and access - based on MfS guidance.	Council image
15.1	Example of development in Dorridge	Officer photo

15.2	Example of frontage re-development in Solihull	Officer photo
16.1	Best practice example from Horsted Park, Kent	Image from National Design Guide 2019, MHCLG
16.2	Example of development in Tidbury Green	Officer photo
16.3	Example of development in Tidbury Green	Officer photo
16.4	Example of development in Balsall Common	Officer photo
16.5	Example of development in Knowle	Officer photo
16.6	Example of development in Tidbury Green	Officer photo
17	Development examples Top left from Shirley South area. Top right and Middle left from: 'City and County of Swansea Infill and Backland Design Guide' 2014. Middle right from Cardiff Infill Sites SPD – Nov 2017. Bottom left from Knowle area.	Officer photos and documents as referenced to the left.
17.1	Example diagram illustrating potential refuse store locations	Council image

Solihull
METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE DIRECTORATE
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
Planning, Design and Engagement Services, Solihull MBC
Council House, Manor Square
Solihull, B91 3QB