



## Design guidance

for residential areas in Letchworth Garden City



## Safeguarding car parking provision when extending or altering your Garden City home

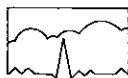
**This information leaflet accompanies the Letchworth Garden City Design Guide and has been produced to give you additional guidance and direction - specifically how to avoid inadequate or inappropriate provision for car parking, as a consequence of developing your property.**

In the Garden City of the new Millennium...

- Motor vehicles per household are on the increase
- There is limited scope for more on-site car parking within the majority of residential plots.
- Many of the earliest built roads are narrow and here, capacity to accommodate more parked cars 'on street' does not exist.
- Increases in the average size of motor vehicles means that many garages are now too small.

The combination of these factors threatens soft landscaping and garden areas at the front of some Garden City homes. Clearly, if more and more front gardens are lost in order to make way for hard standing for cars, the integrity of the Garden City environment in residential areas will be lost. We cannot allow this to happen.

The Letchworth Garden City Design Guide emphasises the need to retain front gardens with soft landscaping. If you are considering removing an existing garage or converting it to provide more living space, you need to consider the following guidance.



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For further information in respect of this note and the Letchworth Design Guide please contact The Estates & Planning Department, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, The Spirella Building, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire SG6 4ET. Tel: 01462 476000 Fax: 01462 476050 Email: info@etchworth.com



### There are five likely scenarios for existing garages:

1. A garage only to the side of the house;
2. A rear garden garage accessed via a driveway from the front of the house;
3. A rear garden garage accessed from the rear;
4. A garage in the front garden; and
5. A garage integrated into a side extension

In the case of the first four, provided the access to the garage is retained, there is unlikely to be a problem.

Where the garage is integrated into a side extension to the house, scenario 5, extra care is needed. The internal width for a garage, with today's cars, should normally be 2.4m.

Many existing 'integrated' garages fall well short of this standard. In these cases, a different approach is needed to increase the options:

- a. Is there any potential for vehicles to access the garage from the rear of the plot or property?
- b. Is it possible to create an alternative front access e.g. perhaps through agreement for joint access with a neighbouring property?
- c. Is there enough space in the front garden to create at least two car parking spaces without infringing the 50% rule?

You must ensure that any proposals are submitted with a clear indication of the amount of space, and for how many vehicles, needed for car parking. It is important that any additional frontage parking area is well masked through hedging and soft landscaping, although the provision/retention of covered car parking will always be sought. Design guidance can be obtained from the Estates & Planning unit of the Heritage Foundation.

## Considering a front extension to your Garden City home?

This information leaflet accompanies the Letchworth Garden City Design Guide and has been produced to provide additional advice and guidance.

First and foremost, are you convinced that extending at the front is actually the best way to enlarge your home?



### Considerable care and attention to detail is required when embarking upon a front extension.

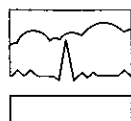
Indeed, consent to applications for a front extension is given only in exceptional circumstances.

Proposals must be of the highest possible standards of design, enhance the existing property and blend in well with their overall environment to stand any chance of acceptance.

One form of front extension, which can be acceptable, is the addition of front porches. Many early Garden City houses have a small canopy over the front door or 'open' porches. These, in effect, create outdoor rooms and are to be encouraged, in some circumstances. The current trend for enclosed porch areas can damage the visual impression of the property.

An application for a porch extension is more likely to be accepted where porches exist as a feature of other properties in the immediate vicinity of your home. However, where the addition of a porch will result in breaking the symmetrical appearance of neighbouring properties, consent may be refused.

Any front extensions should be of minimal depth and bulk to ensure that they are not unduly prominent and do not detract from the local environment.



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## Adding a side extension to your Garden City home

**This information leaflet accompanies the Letchworth Garden City Design Guide and has been produced to provide additional guidance.**

The Design Guide outlines the key principles. Side extensions should not:

- Be detrimental to the style of your house, neighbouring properties or the overall character of the location;
- Close up the gap between the existing and neighbouring properties to the extent where a cramped impression results;
- Be built within one metre of the side boundary.

In many cases, the Heritage Foundation's preference is for side extensions to be set back from the front building line of the existing dwelling to create a visual break. The result of this will be a significantly enhanced and more interesting appearance to the local environment.



### Properties on corner plots

If your house faces a public highway, to the front and side, the extension should provide a separation of two metres, to the side boundary rather than one metre. This will reduce the visual impact and enable a landscaping area, adjacent to the extension, to be created.

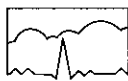
### Ground floor extensions with no separation to the side boundary

When such extensions already exist, first floor extensions should provide a separation of at least one metre to the side boundary, to ensure a visual break is retained.

### Properties adjacent to open spaces or public footpaths

Provided it is possible to get to the rear of the property by way of the other flank, single and two storey extensions, up to the side boundary, may be possible in these circumstances.

However, this will only be admissible if the overall effect on the development does not create a cramped appearance. This is particularly important when there is little or no separation between the side boundary and the public footpath.



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## Adding a rear extension to your Garden City home

**This information leaflet accompanies the Letchworth Garden City Design Guide and has been produced to give you additional guidance.**

Rear extensions are usually the most practical and acceptable way of enlarging your home. The Design Guide outlines the key principles involved when considering extending at the back.

The overriding concern is the need for any development to relate to the main building in terms of its design, size and siting and that it does not result in an unacceptable loss of the original character of the house.

The maximum depth which any new building should be from the original back wall of the property is generally up to 3.65 metres. There are occasions when it is admissible for extensions to exceed this. There are occasions when 3.65 metres is too much.

Where the plot of land is of sufficient width and the extension is not within 4 metres of the closest neighbouring house, it can be increased to 5 metres. Such developments should not be visually prominent from any public space and provide at least 20 metres of rear garden depth.



Some Garden City houses, by their very nature, and size, preclude extending by as much as 3.65 metres.

Special advice should be sought in the case of smaller properties on relatively small plots such as those found with many early Garden City terraced houses.

These additions should normally only be at ground floor level and will usually be admissible up to 3 metres in depth provided a neighbouring property does not have a clear glazed window within one metre of the extension.

If your back garden is 12 metres or less in depth, any extension must ensure that a garden of at least two thirds remains.

The design of your extension, especially in Conservation Areas and early Garden City dwellings is

## Adding a Hardstanding to your Garden City Home

**This information leaflet accompanies the Letchworth Garden City Design Guide and has been produced to give you additional guidance.**

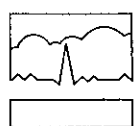
**The construction of hardstandings normally requires the prior approval of the Heritage Foundation. This includes any additional hardsurfaced area to the front, side or rear of the property which adjoins a road or pavement. This consent is required under the terms of most leases and for freeholders, under the Scheme of Management.**

The addition of hardstandings can have a significant impact on the visual character of the property and surrounding area. Damage to the character of the area can be caused by a single property owner undertaking such works or a number of property owners hardsurfacing their frontages.

The recent trend to hardsurface frontages with brightly coloured paviers can cause a particular problem as they tend to be neither sympathetic to the character of the house nor the locality.

### Design Criteria

The Heritage Foundation seeks to ensure that such works cause minimal damage to the visual quality of the Garden City Estate. It appreciates the need and desire for people to park their vehicles off street. Therefore in most instances a small hardstanding to accommodate a vehicle can, in principle, be acceptable. However, at least 50% of the garden should normally be retained as soft planting, shrubs or lawn.

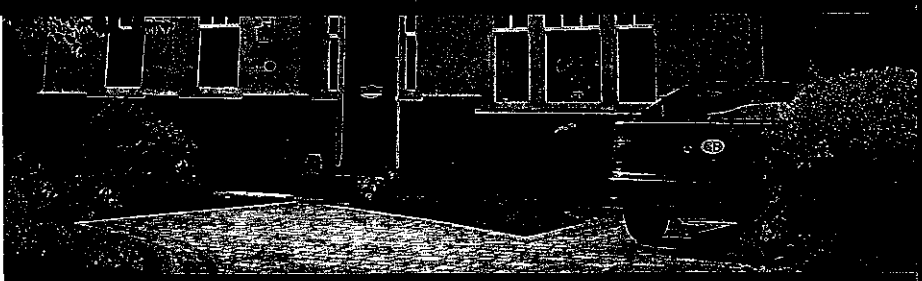


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There is concern about the amount of front hedging which is being removed to accommodate new parking areas. These hedges are an important part of the character of many parts of Letchworth giving it a rural feel. The Heritage Foundation will seek to ensure that as much of this hedging is retained as possible. In circumstances where a group of properties have an unbroken hedge line, consent to make a break in the hedge for a hardstanding may be refused. The retention of pedestrian gates will be encouraged.

Once the principle of a hardstanding has been accepted, consideration should be paid to design and surfacing materials. Tarmac, mass concrete or brightly coloured paviers will not normally be accepted, especially in the Conservation Areas. Use of neutral coloured materials will be encouraged, such as gravel, stone or concrete setts. There should be an element of landscaping to soften the hard surfaced area, either immediately adjacent to the hardstanding or between 'run in' areas.

### Caravans and Commercial Vehicles

It should also be emphasised that the consent of the Heritage Foundation is normally required for the siting of a caravan or commercial vehicle on the frontage of a property within the Letchworth Estate. Clarification from the Heritage Foundation should be sought regarding this matter.

### Submitting An Application

Prior to starting works, plans indicating the proposed hardstanding, landscaping (existing and proposed) and the relationship with the dwelling should be submitted to the Heritage Foundation for consideration. Advice on what is likely to be acceptable can be obtained from the Estates and Planning Unit. Works should not commence on a hardstanding until prior approval has been received. Planning permission, from North Hertfordshire District Council, is not normally required for hardstandings, unless the proposal seeks a new dropped kerb on to a classified road. A licence from North Herts Highway Partnership is also normally required for dropped kerbs on to adopted roads.

## Adding Replacement Windows to your Garden City Home

**This information leaflet accompanies the Letchworth Garden City Design Guide and has been produced to give you additional guidance.**

**In recent years, there has been a trend to replace wooden windows in Letchworth properties with UPVC and aluminium.**

**Alterations to windows and doors have a significant effect on the appearance of not just the property, but a group of properties and the area as a whole. This is particularly the case for properties within Conservation Areas.**

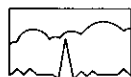
Most Letchworth properties have a feature of softwood painted windows, divided by wooden glazing bars. Some properties have small paned leaded lights. These painted softwood windows have lasted for many years and are an important feature of Letchworth properties.

This material is still felt to be the most acceptable.

Generally the dark staining of hardwood windows is inappropriate in the Garden City.

### Are new windows needed?

In many cases a suitable repair to existing windows can prove more effective than replacements. This can often prove to be cheaper. Weather stripping of frames or internal secondary glazing can improve the existing insulation qualities of wooden windows. It should be remembered that in some cases these wooden windows have been performing their function for almost one hundred years.



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### Grants

The Heritage Foundation is keen to support the renewal of windows with wooden replacements, and will normally offer Heritage Grants if wooden replacement windows are installed. Details of these grants are available from the Heritage Foundation. Grants may also be available from the North Hertfordshire District Council for works to Listed Buildings. Grant assistance is not normally available for replacement UPVC or aluminium windows or for the repair of existing windows.

### Landlords Consent & Planning Permission

The consent of the Heritage Foundation is normally required for replacement windows and doors. This is included in the terms of the lease or the Scheme of Management for freehold property. Planning permission is not normally required from the North Hertfordshire District Council, although it must be emphasised that Listed Building Consent will be required for such works on any grade of Listed Building. North Hertfordshire District Council should be contacted prior to commencing works.

### Listed Buildings

The Heritage Foundation and North Hertfordshire District Council will normally refuse consent for UPVC or aluminium windows or doors on Listed Buildings. This approach accords with central government advice relating to Listed Buildings. UPVC or aluminium materials have an unacceptable impact on Listed Buildings, the character of which must be retained. This is even the case when replacement UPVC windows are a good match to the originals. The benefits of replacement windows in terms of insulation and maintenance are far out weighed by the impact on the character and future historical value of the Listed Building.

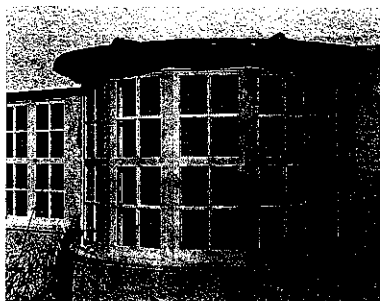
*continued overleaf*

## Adding Replacement Windows to your Garden City Home

### Design Criteria

In determining the design of the proposed replacement windows care should be taken to ensure that the overall style, pane subdivisions, glazing bar width and depth, and finish should match the original windows. If you are unable to ascertain this information, the Heritage Foundation, North Hertfordshire District Council or First Garden City Heritage Museum may be able to assist you.

In the Conservation Areas, UPVC windows will only be accepted if they match the existing or preferably original design, which includes the method of opening. Mock glazing bars sandwiched between panes of glass are now discouraged as external glazing bars can now be made for UPVC windows.



It is strongly recommended that North Hertfordshire District Council are contacted prior to any serious consideration of replacement windows on Listed Buildings. Should you be unsure as to whether your property is listed, confirmation can be sought from the Council. Although there may be Listed Buildings in your vicinity that have undertaken such works, this could have been prior to the listing or may not have the benefit of formal approval.

The existence of other Listed Buildings with replacement windows does not mean that consent will be granted for your property.

### Submitting An Application

When submitting an application for consent, drawings of existing and proposed windows must be supplied to the Heritage Foundation for consideration. Statements saying windows will match existing, in the absence of any plans, will not be acceptable.

Full elevational drawings of the whole dwelling, along with sectional drawings of the windows, will always be required for applications relating to Listed Buildings.

It is recommended that the advice of the Heritage Foundation is sought for all properties within the Letchworth estate, especially for properties in the Conservation Areas. This is likely to save time and expense. The following stages are recommended: -

1. Can the windows be satisfactorily retained with repairs or the addition of secondary glazing?
2. Is the building listed? If so advice should be sought from the North Hertfordshire District Council. Otherwise contact the Heritage Foundation to check whether consent is required and for initial advice.
3. Consider option of grants from the North Hertfordshire District Council and the Heritage Foundation.
4. Prepare application for consent. Pay particular care to the design of the proposal, especially if it relates to a Listed Building or a property within a Conservation Area.
5. Submit application(s).
6. Receive consent from the Heritage Foundation and in the cases of Listed Buildings the North Hertfordshire District Council.
6. Commence work.



## Looking to develop, extend or alter your Garden City home

### Charges for development consent

In recent years, the number of applications received by the Heritage Foundation from Letchworth residents to alter their Garden City properties, has steadily increased. Accordingly, all applications received by the Heritage Foundation on or after are now subject to the payment of a fee. Income generated through these charges will help to offset administration costs and, moreover, be used to fund grants to further improve the Garden City.



### The fees

1. For minor applications including garden sheds, fencing, replacement windows and doors, re-roofing, driveways, and front paving – **No Charge**.
2. For major works such as extensions (including porches and front canopies), demolitions and any application where the area of the property is to be altered or rebuilt in any way – **£30.00 plus VAT @17.5% (£35.25)**.
3. Retrospective applications for major works listed above, the fee level will be – **£45.00 plus VAT (£52.87)**.

These charges are additional to those levied by North Hertfordshire District Council and you should contact the Council (01462 474000) in respect of their fees for planning applications and or building control.

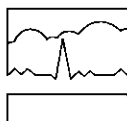
Fees to the Heritage Foundation must accompany each application and should be paid by cheque only, made payable to 'LGCHF'.

In the event that your application to the Heritage Foundation is refused, you will not be required to pay a further fee for a revised application, provided you submit the amended scheme within six months of the initial decision.

If you wish to clarify the fee level for your particular application please contact:

The Estates & Planning Unit, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, Suite 401, The Spirella Building, Letchworth Garden City Herts SG6 4ET.

Tel: 01462 476000 Email: [info@lethworth.com](mailto:info@lethworth.com)



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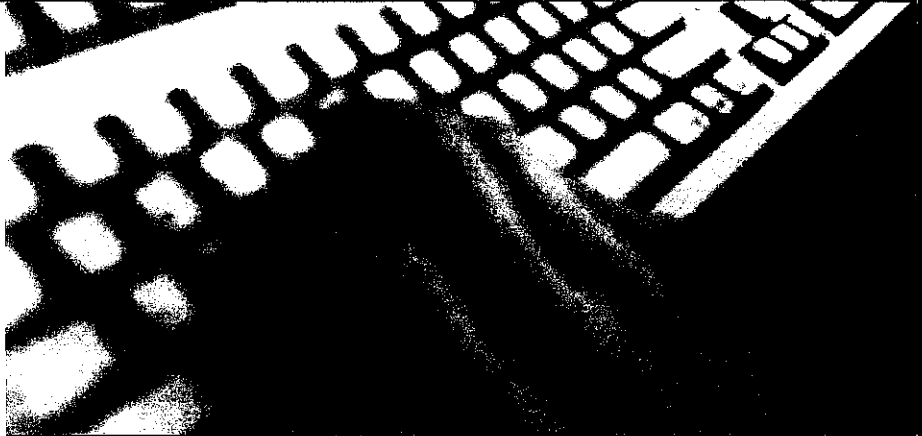
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**Working from home?  
You may need a licence...**

**This information leaflet accompanies the Letchworth Garden City Design Guide and has been produced to give you additional guidance.**

**Under the terms of the deeds of the property, many freeholders and leaseholders are not allowed to run a business from their home without prior written consent from the Heritage Foundation.**



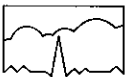
Working from home is an increasingly attractive option for many people and the Heritage Foundation acknowledges that, with today's communication technologies, it is the way forward for many people.

However, in order to protect neighbours and safeguard the quality of the Garden City environment, the Heritage Foundation requires such residents to seek permission by registering their home business activity.

Subject to meeting criteria that the business does not constitute a potential threat to the immediate environment or the comfort of neighbours, the Heritage Foundation will issue an annual 'reviewable' and renewable licence.

If you are already running your own business from home or considering working from home, this form is for you. Please complete it as fully and frankly as possible. The information you write down will provide the basis upon which we will evaluate your application for a licence.

Should you require any assistance in completing the form or if you have any other queries concerning your application, please do not hesitate to contact our Estates & Planning Department on 01462 476000 or email [info@letchworth.com](mailto:info@letchworth.com)



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*Please see form overleaf*

**Please complete the form below and return  
to the address given opposite**

Name

Address

Telephone

E Mail

Name of Business

Date established?

How long has the business operated at the above address?

Nature of business?

Please give a brief description

Approximately how much of the property does the business occupy within the house, garage, outbuildings, and grounds

Will any new building or alteration to the property or grounds be required?

What machinery, equipment or vehicles does the business require at the property?

How many non-residents work for the business at the property?

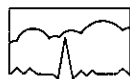
What car parking arrangements are in place?

How many business visitors/deliveries come to the property each day?

Does the business produce any outputs to the environment/adjoining properties e.g. noise, fumes, waste?

During what hours does the business operate at the property?

Signature



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Please send your completed form to:

Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation,  
Suite 401, The Spirella Building, Bridge Road, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire SG6 4ET  
Tel: 01462 476020 Fax: 01462 476050

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## What is so special?

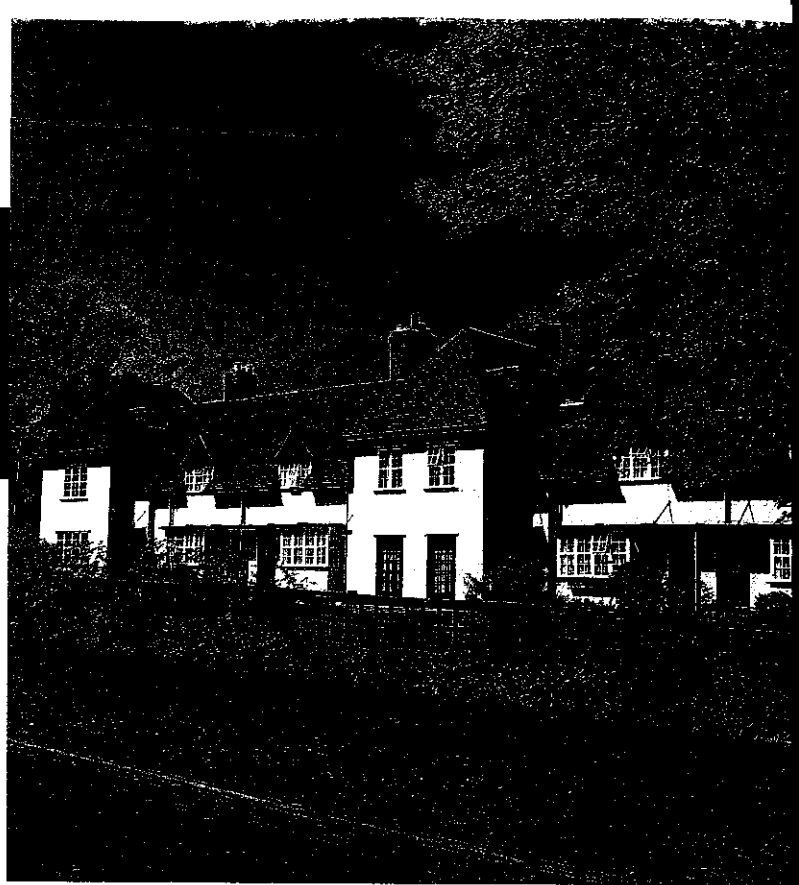


Letchworth has a special place in the history of town planning as the world's first Garden City. It was established in 1903, based on the theories of Ebenezer Howard in his book 'Tomorrow – A Peaceful Path to Real Reform', that new, ideal communities could be created by combining the best of town and country. Houses were designed to harmonise with each other, sometimes as groups built around greens or closes. Materials such as white or cream roughcast, red stock brick, and red plain clay tiles were widely used. Architectural features such as chimneys, dormer and bay windows were designed to add visual interest and variety. The layout plan by architects Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin featured low density housing development set in spacious gardens along tree-lined streets. It was these aspects which attracted the first residents and set standards of housing and of town planning for the twentieth century.



This Design Guide is published by Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation. The guide provides detailed advice to owners and their professional advisers. North Hertfordshire District Council has contributed to the Design Guide and adopted it as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Local Plan. It includes 'do's and don'ts' on property maintenance, alterations and extensions, to help ensure that any changes to Garden City properties, whether old or new, are in harmony with their original design and character and are appropriate to the area in which they are situated.

# Letchworth Special Approvals Procedures



Alterations or extensions to your home will almost always require the approval of the Heritage Foundation and usually of North Hertfordshire District Council. Check first, before you draw up your plans, and seek advice on the design/materials that will be acceptable. (For further information on applying for approval see inside back cover.)

## **Letchworth's Special Approvals Procedures**

The Garden City is unusual in having two separate bodies which control building development. Both have a responsibility to preserve Letchworth's character and amenity.

North Hertfordshire District Council is the local planning authority, and you must make your applications for planning permission, listed building and conservation area consent to this Council.

Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation is the estate landlord which owns and/or manages much of the land on which the town is built. If your property is within the Letchworth Garden City estate, and you want to make changes to it, you must apply to the Heritage Foundation for Landlord's consent. This is a requirement under the terms of your lease or, if you are a freeholder, under a special Scheme of Management.

Permitted development and minor changes may not need planning permission from the District Council. However they will still require landlord's consent. Structural alterations will need approval under the Building Regulations, from the District Council.

## **Change of Use**

It is also important to note that if you want to change the use of your house you will need permission both from the District Council, under planning requirements, and from the Heritage Foundation, under the terms of your lease or Scheme of Management. This may include a change from a single dwelling house to flats or other multiple occupation. You should also enquire whether you need permission if you propose to run a business from your home.

# Conservation Areas, Areas of Development Restraint and Listed Buildings



## Conservation Areas

The special character of Letchworth Garden City led to the designation by North Hertfordshire District Council, in 1974, of a large Conservation Area, including the old village of Letchworth, the town centre and major residential areas built before 1914. There are other Conservation Areas at Norton, Croft Lane, and Willian. The District Council has a responsibility to ensure that any developments within Conservation Areas which require planning permission, including extensions or other exterior work, 'preserve or enhance' the special character for which those areas have been designated. There are periodic reviews of Conservation Areas by the District Council, in consultation with local residents, and boundaries may change.

## Areas of Development Restraint

In addition to the designated Conservation Area, the Heritage Foundation has identified early residential areas as 'Areas of Development Restraint'. These are areas which, whilst not meriting Conservation Area status, nor forming part of the formal planning process have a harmonious design and layout which the Heritage Foundation wants to retain. The Heritage Foundation will therefore resist any alteration or extension to houses in these areas which are not sensitive to their surroundings. Staff at the Heritage Foundation will be able to assist in identifying the Areas of Development Restraint.

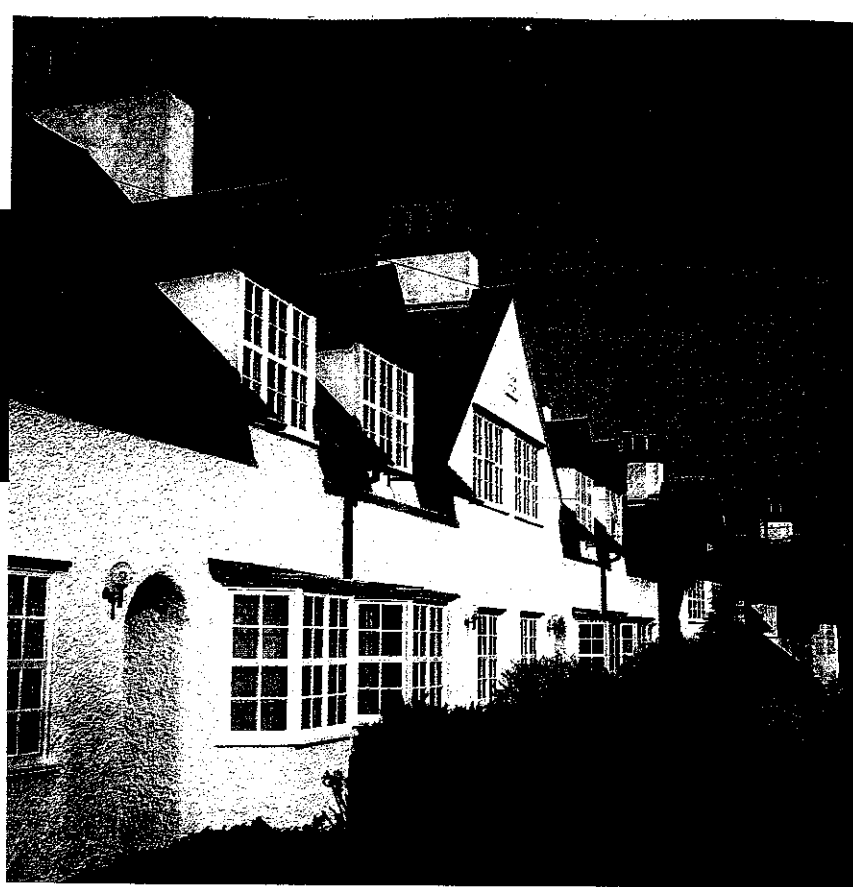
## Listed Buildings

There are nearly 400 properties, many of them residential, which are included in the statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. They are of very special importance to the Garden City. It is vital therefore that any alteration or extension is designed to preserve or enhance the original character of the building. In most cases this implies a close match of the original in design and materials, but in some instances a contrasting solution could be appropriate. If you live in a listed house you must apply to the District Council for Listed Building Consent before you carry out any demolition, extension or alteration. This includes both exterior and interior works.

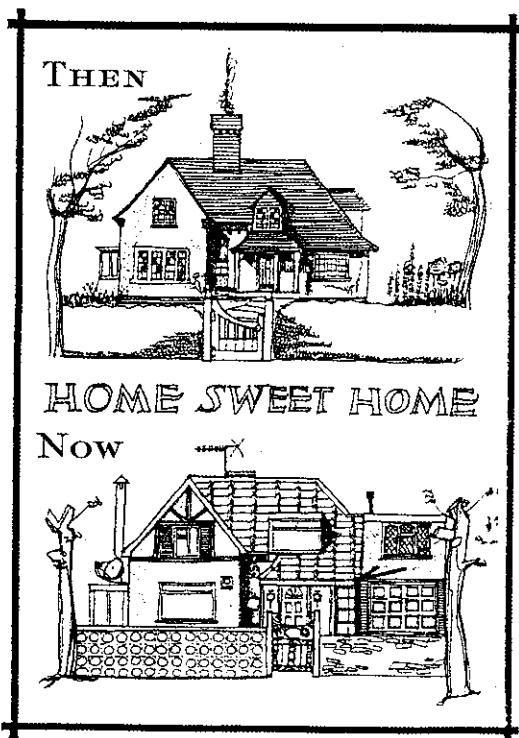




# Maintenance and Alteration of Early Garden City Houses



Much of the early Garden City housing is characterised by its attention to detail. Retention and repair of original features will not only enhance the appearance and individuality of a house but may also improve its financial value. You should therefore first see whether it is possible to repair rather than replace such features as windows and doors. However, where replacement is inevitable, you should take care over the selection of design and materials.



Many standard products and modern materials may not be suitable in appearance for use on early Garden City homes or in a Conservation Area. Replicas should be used where possible and re-roofing should be with reclaimed or matching tiles.

It is also important to note that in a number of areas of the Garden City, housing was designed in distinct groups or small estates, many in terraces, where unity of detail and materials are key to their original character. In these cases, attempts to individualise one house will harm the appearance and architectural harmony of the group and, again, may affect their financial value. If you live in such an area, it is worth talking with your neighbours so that you can all co-operate to maintain the special quality of your group of houses.

The Heritage Foundation runs a grant scheme which helps owners meet the additional cost of replacement non-standard windows, doors, roof tiles etc, which match the original, and the cost of restoring original features such as chimneys. North Hertfordshire District Council also runs a grants scheme to help with the cost of repairs to the fabric of Listed Buildings, such as render and brickwork repairs, retiling and the repair of original doors and windows. (See inside back cover for further details.)

#### **Spot the difference**

*The cartoons here show a typical Garden City house built before 1914 as it was then and how it might look today. Almost every feature has been altered, removing much of the harmony of the original design.*

# Extensions



## **If an extension is to be acceptable, some basic principles must be observed:**

- ◆ The extension should be designed to respect the original character of the house.
- ◆ It should not dominate the original building in size or position, nor should it overlook or overshadow a neighbouring house or garden.
- ◆ It should retain, enhance or improve the overall appearance of the property, and the opportunity should, if possible, be taken to remove insensitive additions from the past, or later windows and doors which are not in character with the building.
- ◆ It should reflect and be sympathetic to the character of the neighbourhood.
- ◆ Particular safeguards apply to Listed houses and care must be taken to ensure that extensions do not damage their special character.

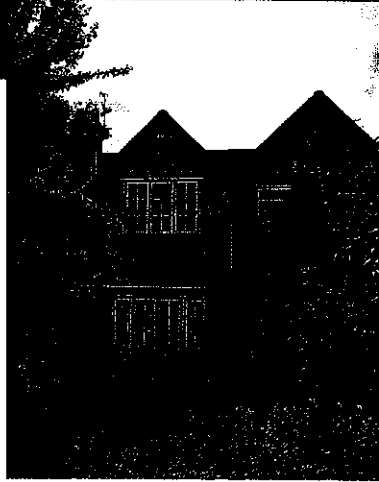
Desire for greater living space, additional bedrooms, bathrooms or larger kitchens brings pressure for substantial alterations and extensions to Garden City properties. Such changes will permanently alter the appearance and character of a property and will also have an impact on the surrounding area. Present owners and prospective purchasers should therefore assess ways of making the best use of the existing layout, with perhaps small alterations and extensions, rather than seeking to extend to the maximum that the plot appears to offer. Special care should be taken when planning changes to the interior of Listed Buildings so as not to harm their original character. Listed Building Consent will be needed for most changes.

The design of a successful house extension requires a knowledge of the building type and a sensitive handling of scale and detail. First and foremost, any new extension must respect the original character of a building in terms of its size, proportions, details and materials. In most

instances, the extension should blend with the existing, though sometimes a well-handled contrast may successfully complement the character of the original. An extension should be in keeping with the size of the original house. For example, properties designed as small cottages will not lend themselves to additions which create a large house. The District Council and Heritage Foundation staff will offer informal advice about extensions. However, you are advised to employ an architect or suitably qualified professional to draw up your plans and to see the project through to construction.

If you are thinking of an extension, try to view your proposals from your neighbours' perspective, and discuss them openly. Agreement at this stage can often help to 'smooth the passage' at the application or construction stage, although the Council and Foundation will ultimately consider each proposal on its own merits.

# Extensions



## Position of Extensions

Each application is looked at with regard to its scale and impact in relation to the space available, the character of the individual house, its neighbouring properties and surroundings.

Rear extensions are usually the most practical solution, rarely having any impact upon the publicly visible streetscene. However, attention must be paid to their position and size, especially on terraced and semi-detached properties, so that they do not adversely affect adjacent properties.

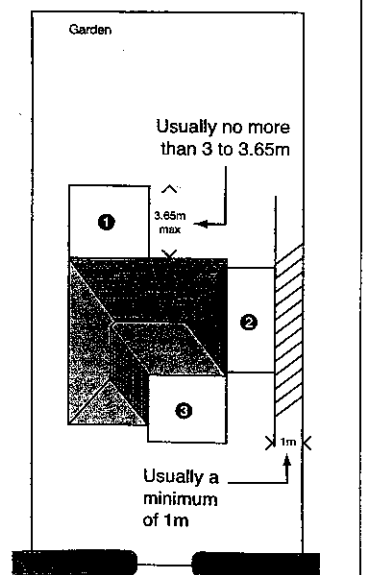
In some areas of Letchworth the low overall density of housing means that side extensions can be allowed without detriment to the style of the existing house,

to neighbouring properties or to the overall character of the location. In other areas, for instance, small cottages or planned groups, side extensions may close up the gap between houses, creating a cramped visual appearance or terraced effect, unacceptably changing the character of the area. This can be particularly true of two storey extensions.

Front extensions are potentially the most visually damaging. They will often disrupt the front building line of a row or formal group of houses. Even in areas of housing of varied shapes and sizes, long front gardens and informal layouts, they will need to be handled with great sensitivity and care.

The Council and the Heritage Foundation expect proposals for extensions to take the following into account:

- 1** Rear extensions may be least obtrusive from public viewpoints. However, they may have a major impact on neighbouring properties, particularly if two storey. Rear extensions should not dominate adjoining property and be well related to the existing and neighbouring dwellings. As a guide, extending more than 3.65m from the rear of the original back wall is generally to be avoided, although in some cases a depth in excess of 3m may not be acceptable. Any proposal, however, must pay regard to the particular character of the individual house and to its relationship to adjacent properties.
- 2** Side extensions are often acceptable on wide plots. Building close to side boundaries should be designed to ensure the extension does not result in a continuous built frontage, terracing effect or cramped visual impact. The Heritage Foundation will normally seek the provision of a one metre separation to the side boundary on all extensions and the retention of access from front to back gardens.
- 3** Front extensions are potentially the most obtrusive, both to the original house and the street scene. They are only likely to be accepted in exceptional circumstances.



# Building Materials & Design Features



Throughout older parts of Letchworth Garden City there are countless surviving examples of simple designs, effective detailing and original materials which provide a model for carrying out repairs and new works. When contemplating any building works, you should always start by looking at the primary materials and detailing of your own house.

Building regulations were introduced by the original developers of the Garden City to ensure that good housing design was not spoilt by unsuitable materials and poor detailing: 'A high standard of beauty... can only result from simple and straightforward building and the use of good and harmonious materials'. 'Useless ornamentation' was discouraged, and simple house designs were made more effective by the attention given to chimneys, roof eaves, dormer windows, porches, doors and windows. From the beginning, the exercise of strict controls ensured a small but good quality range of natural building materials, and this contributed greatly to the present, striking character of the Garden City.

## **Bricks and external walls**

Many original Garden City houses had a roughcast cement finish. Some were left as unpainted 'pebbledash', others were given a cream/off-white colourwash. Plinths were natural red-brick or black-tarred. Woodwork was black, green or cream painted. Today a wider range of paint colours is available, but the originals are to be preferred and can be quite easily reproduced. It is, however, most important that terraces, planned groups and semi-detached properties adopt the same overall colour scheme.

Red stock bricks were widely used and good reclaimed materials can usually be obtained to give the

best finish to new building work. If new bricks are to be used they should blend with the existing in general colour, shading, and size. It is also important to match the jointing or pointing: most early Garden City brickwork used lime mortar with a flush joint wiped with sacking to give a rough texture. Modern 'struck' joints finished with a metal trowel should be avoided. In important early Garden City buildings, it may also be necessary to match the original brick bond.

Artificial cladding of Garden City houses is generally aesthetically unacceptable and will be resisted by the Council or by the Heritage Foundation within its estate. (In Conservation Areas such work would need planning permission and would be resisted by the District Council).

Owners of listed buildings must apply for Listed Building Consent from the District Council if they intend to paint their properties a radically different colour, or paint over surfaces that are unpainted. Any unsympathetic alterations will be resisted.

# Roofs & Tiles



## Tiles

Most of the early houses in Letchworth were built with steeply pitched roofs of 45-50 degrees, hung with plain clay tiles. Gables and dormer windows created a lively skyline. Since that time roof pitches have gradually become lower and machine-made concrete tiles have been introduced. Whatever the age of the house, care should be taken, when replacing a roof or building an extension, to match the original tiles and roof pitch as closely as possible.

On Listed Buildings, tiles must match the original. This may involve the use of good reclaimed tiles and owners are expected to re-use existing, undamaged tiles. Often it is the fixings, rather than the tiles, that have failed so that, with care, the original tiles can be reclaimed and re-laid. If new tiles are necessary, Council or Heritage Foundation staff will be pleased to advise which ones would be acceptable. Owners are reminded that grants may be available to help with the cost of re-roofing older properties with matching replacement tiles.

It is best if owners of semi detached or terrace properties can co-operate to re-roof at the same time and use the same materials. This can also reduce the cost of the work. If one house in a group has been retiled, then it is likely that the tiles used will become the standard for future retiling on other houses in the group.

## Roof features

Design details of roofs are very important. Owners should look carefully at the existing roof in all its details and try to copy these. Look out for the following features in traditional Garden City houses:

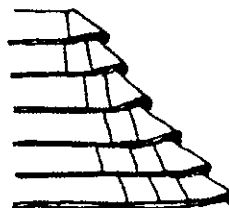
gables with a tiled undercloak rather than wooden bargeboards

open eaves where the feet of the rafters are visible, and support guttering brackets

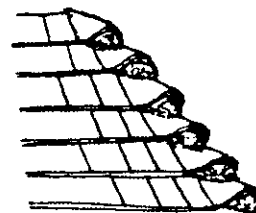
the use of short rafters fixed near the bottom of the roof, softening the angle

on hipped roofs, the use of well-bedded bonnet hips, rather than bulky, half round ridge tiles

swept valley junctions, rather than a valley gutter, between projecting gables or dormer roofs

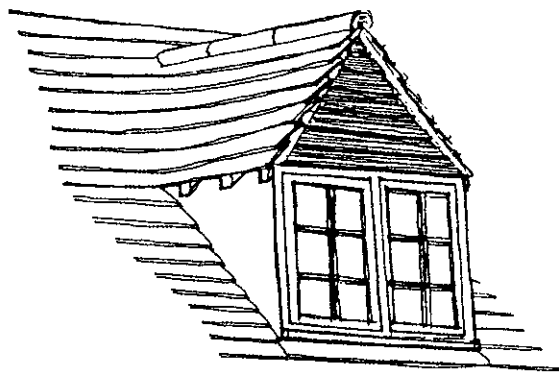
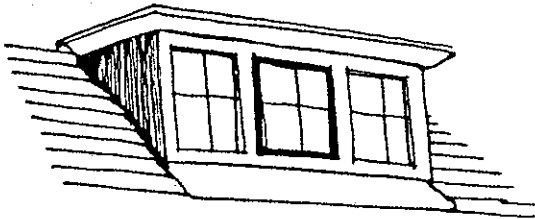


Correct



Incorrect

# Chimneys



## Loft Conversions and Dormers

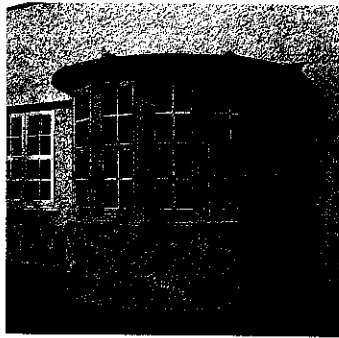
It is understandable that owners should look to the large roof spaces found in many early Garden City houses, to create additional living space. This solution will inevitably introduce the need for new window openings which should be treated with great care and which will require the consent of the Heritage Foundation. Dormer windows should be modest in relation to the size of the roof, without dominating or upsetting the balance of any elevations. Their design should reflect the style and appearance of the house. Within the Conservation Areas any front elevation dormers will also need planning permission from North Hertfordshire District Council and will only be allowed if they do not have a detrimental effect on the character of the area. Care must be taken to avoid the significant overlooking of adjoining or nearby properties. The use of roof lights in unobtrusive situations may be acceptable, particularly if they are the flat, 'conservation' type.

Although open fires are now less common, chimneys remain a significant part of the design of many Letchworth houses. They are often structurally important, and give visual strength and a lively silhouette to the overall external appearance of the house. Chimneys which are no longer used for open fires may be suitable for adapting for central heating flues or to house unsightly plumbing pipework. Demolishing or reinstating chimney stacks can be expensive. If you retain and look after your existing ones, you will keep your options open, particularly if fires come back into more general use. You may qualify for a grant towards the cost of repairs to, or rebuilding of, chimneys and you should ask about this.

The removal of any chimney requires consent from the Heritage Foundation, and if your house is a Listed Building the consent of the Council will also be required. In either case, consent for demolition is unlikely to be given where the stack is an important feature of the building's character.



# Doors and Windows



The replacement of windows and doors appears to be taking place at an ever increasing rate and it is important to point out that for nearly all areas in Letchworth such replacements require the consent of the Heritage Foundation. Alterations to windows and doors in Listed Buildings also require the Consent of the District Council. In either case, owners must supply drawings which show the exact details, including finish, of the proposed replacement.

## Windows

Alterations to original windows and doors have a greater effect on the appearance and character of a house than almost any other change. They are likely to have a particular effect if the house is one of a group. Such alterations should therefore be carried out with great sensitivity.

The first question to ask is whether repair is possible as an alternative to total replacement. This may be a much more cost effective and satisfactory solution, and there are

skilled joiners in the area who can carry out these repairs. The frames of original windows can also be made more efficient by weather-stripping to exclude draughts, or internal secondary glazing can be fitted.

If new windows are required as replacements or for extensions, they should match the existing windows, and preferably the original, as closely as possible. The overall style, pane subdivisions, glazing bar width and depth, and finish should be repeated.

Most older Letchworth houses have painted softwood window frames, divided by wooden glazing bars. Some have small paned leaded lights. Both types of window are an integral part of the design of the house and its character and should not be changed. There is no reason why softwood with a painted finish should not continue to be a satisfactory material for replacement windows, provided that suitable timber is specified. Stained finishes, whatever the timber, do not suit the appearance of early Garden City houses and should be avoided.

Heritage Foundation or Council Officers can provide advice to owners on the design of window replacements, and give information about joiners in the area who can carry out repairs and make replacements which exactly match the original. Owners are reminded of the grants available to help with the cost.

Modern aluminium and UPVC replacement windows are unacceptable for Listed Buildings. They may be



## Porches

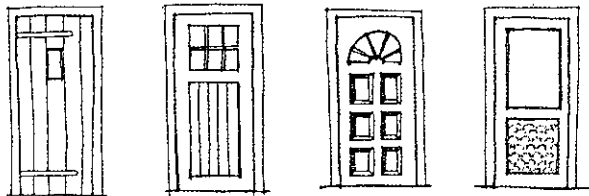


allowed in some areas, if they closely match the style of the original. For early Garden City dwellings and properties within the Conservation Areas, modern materials will only be accepted in such cases where it is demonstrated that the new windows are entirely consistent with the originals. Whilst these products are marketed as 'maintenance free', owners should be cautious as to whether this is the case in the longer term. Generally, it is preferable to repair or match the original timber windows. This is because it is often difficult to reproduce the original details and appearance using other materials.

### Doors

Replacement doors should similarly reflect and replicate, if possible, the style and material of the original. Too often, the use of modern materials results in unsympathetic and unacceptable design. Many early Garden City doors had a cottage-like appearance, being made of wide timber planks, with small glazed areas in the upper third, sometimes divided into small panes.

Modern 'Georgian style' doors and windows are inappropriate for the Garden City which takes more of its features from traditional, rural buildings. Therefore bow windows, bottle glass and arched fanlights (including those incorporated in doors) should be avoided.



Doors to early Garden City houses had a simple cottagey appearance and were usually painted softwood.

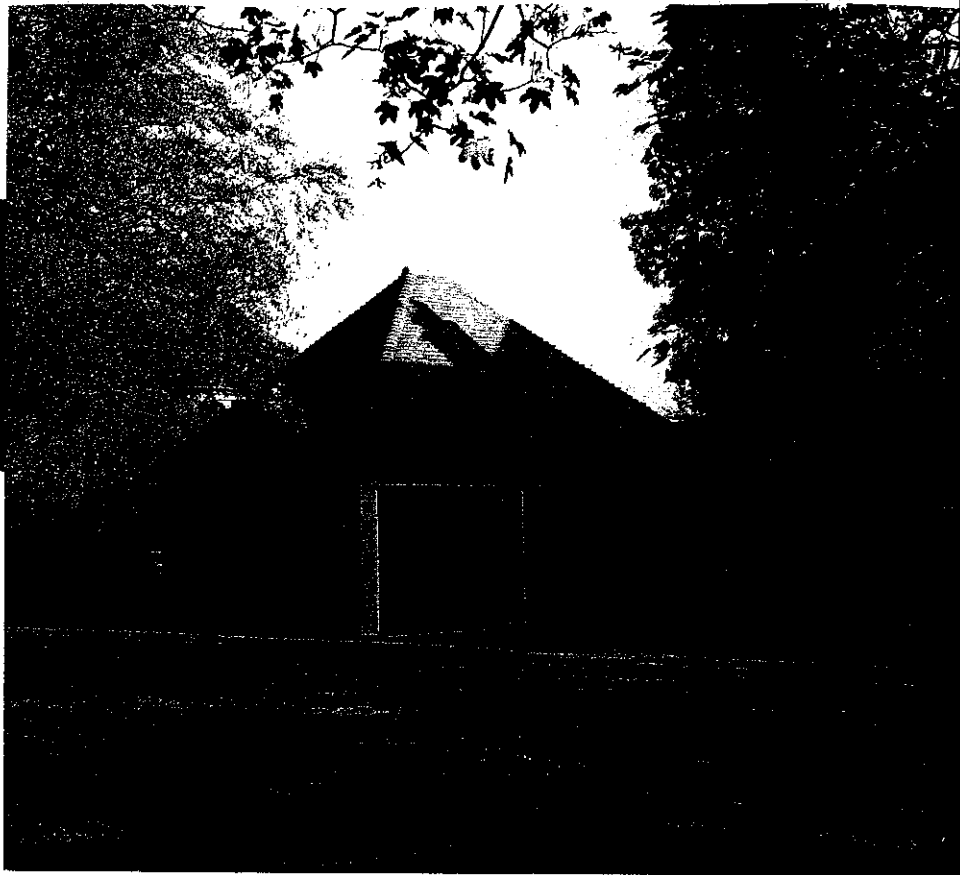
Modern hardwood or Aluminium doors can spoil the appearance of Garden City properties and should be avoided.

Many early Garden City houses had little more than a small canopy or tiled doorhood over the front door. More ambitious houses, however, often had open porches, some with benches or settles, creating attractive outdoor rooms. All these types of entrance features should be preserved. New porches, which are generally enclosed, need to be designed in sympathy with the style of the building to which they relate and the same basic design and construction principles apply to porches as they do to other extensions. The addition, alteration or removal of any porch will require permission from the Heritage Foundation and, if the porch is a significant size, height or in a prominent position, it may also require Council planning permission. One consideration will be the visual effect that a porch, or its removal, may have on the symmetry of a particular group of houses. For Listed Buildings, the removal, addition or alteration of a porch will always need Listed Building Consent.





# Garages, Hardstandings and paving in front gardens



Letchworth's planners could not have anticipated the current level of car ownership, nor how busy roads would be today, and the consequent demand for off-street parking. It is important to ensure that the appearance of houses and their surroundings are not spoilt by the introduction of insensitively designed or positioned garages, large areas of inappropriately surfaced hard standing and the removal of hedges and fences.

The consent of the Heritage Foundation is required for all garages, frontage hardstandings and boundary treatments, when the following guidance will be applied. This will also be applied by the Council in cases where such works require planning permission.

## Garages

If there is room for a garage, it should be designed in sympathy with the house to which it relates, and should, if possible, be set back from the front building line. In some cases, it may be possible to lessen the visual impact of the garage by turning it on the plot so that the doors are not immediately visible. Building materials, doors and roof should be in keeping with the house. Brick built, or rendered blockwork garages with pitched roofs are preferable in the older residential areas, but where the

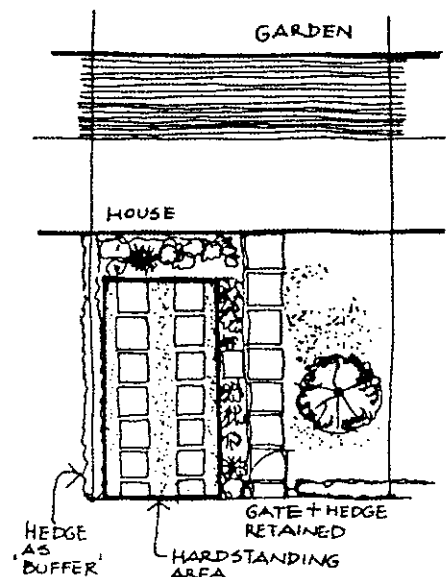


garage is to be sited close to neighbouring property, a correctly detailed flat roof, with a brick-on-edge coping, may be preferable.

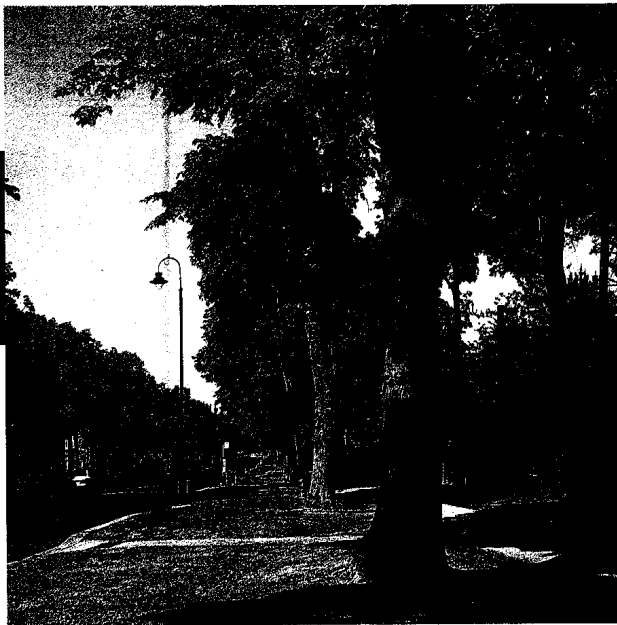
## Hardstandings and paving in front gardens

Where hard standings are to be created in front gardens, the Heritage Foundation will require the use of materials such as gravel, stone or neutral coloured concrete setts. Tarmac, mass concrete or brightly coloured paviors are not acceptable. As much as possible of the front hedging, planting and grass should be retained or replanted and, as a general rule, no more than 50% of the front garden should be given over to hard standing.

It is possible to soften the effect of hard-standings by retaining pedestrian gates and hedges and by treating the hard-standing as twin paved run-in strips on a grass or gravel background.



## Landscaping and Trees



For most people the most distinct and special character of Letchworth Garden City are the open spaces and landscaping. Garden hedging, numerous mature trees and wide road verges have all added to the rural atmosphere of the town and it is vital to the Garden City scene that they are retained. All who live and work in the town have a responsibility to help maintain this landscape.

### **Boundary hedges, fences and walls**

#### **Hedges**

Most early front gardens were enclosed by hedges and/or low fences. These are just as important as trees to the appearance of the Garden City and should be kept and maintained at an appropriate height. They may only be removed or changed with the approval of the Heritage Foundation. In general, hedges, or a combination of

fences should be in keeping with those already existing in the same road. The hedging recommended is privet, box or beech, rather than fast growing conifers which can so quickly become a grim fortress, destroying the character of a neighbourhood.

#### **Fences and Walls**

The rules on fences and walls vary according to where you live.

Wherever you live in Letchworth planning permission is needed for all new front or road-side fences over 1 metre in height and for rear ones over 2 metres. Front fences should be of an 'open' picket type, not close boarded or woven. Front boundary walls are not common in Letchworth and on the whole hedges of an appropriate type are to be encouraged as they present a less harsh appearance more in keeping with the original Garden City.



### Trees

All owners living within Letchworth's Conservation Areas must formally notify the Council of their intent to carry out any work to trees, ~~other than fruit trees~~, on their property. There is a presumption in favour of retaining all trees within the Letchworth Conservation Areas, and a tree preservation order may be served by the Council to protect groups or individual trees.

Outside the Conservation Areas owners must still seek the permission of the Heritage Foundation for the felling of trees. The removal of trees from individual residential properties will be permitted only where a clear case exists to justify such action. Dead, dying or dangerous trees will be considered as exceptions, but anyone wishing to carry out work to a prominent, publicly visible tree in their garden will be expected to obtain advice from a specialist tree contractor, and to employ appropriate measures to save the tree if possible, through remedial work. Council and Heritage Foundation staff are able to offer advice and supply a list of local specialists.

Where a tree is removed, appropriate replacement planting will usually be expected.

### Open garden frontages

Some groups of houses, residential areas or estates have been designed with open garden frontages, and these should be kept open in order to preserve the existing street scene. Proposals for enclosures which disrupt this design will generally not be allowed by the Heritage Foundation or District Council.



## Recognising excellence



Letchworth homeowners generally take great pride in carrying out work to their properties and seek to achieve a high quality of design and workmanship, worthy of the standards set by the Garden City's original planners and architects, which enhances both the property and its neighbourhood. A good, well-executed scheme can also add value to the property, and should be appreciated by neighbours!

Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation runs a bi-annual Garden City Heritage Awards Scheme which gives public recognition and encouragement to owners, designers and contractors who observe the principles of good design and workmanship set out in this Design Guide. North Hertfordshire District Council runs a similar scheme for the whole District.



## Archaeology in Letchworth

There are several sites of archaeological importance in Letchworth, for instance at Norton Common, Willian, Norton and Wilbury. You can find out more about the extent of these sites from the County Archaeologist at County Hall, Hertford, Tel: 01992 555244. Any application for planning permission to build on or near one of the areas of archaeological significance may lead to a requirement that an archaeological evaluation of the site is carried out first.

## Satellite Dishes v Cable TV

Generally, satellite dishes should be as inconspicuous as possible, preferably on the rear or side elevations of houses, and not on chimneys. You must obtain the consent of the Heritage Foundation to put dishes of any size on front elevations or prominent side walls or roofs. Provided that the dish is less than 90 cm in diameter and sited below eaves level the District Council's planning permission will not be required, but if you live in the Conservation Areas you will need planning permission for any dish on a house wall facing the road or any other public open space. If you live in a Listed Building you will need local authority consent for a dish, whatever its size or whether you propose to site it on the building.

Now that cabling has been installed in many areas of Letchworth, it is hoped that owners will opt for this rather than satellite dishes.

# Applying for Grants towards building work

## **Heritage Grants**

Heritage Grants are made by Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation to help preserve the character and style of early Garden City houses, by encouraging home owners to use materials and designs that match the originals.

The grants, which are discretionary, are available to help meet the cost of a variety of projects, including the replacement or refurbishment of windows, doors, roofs and chimneys. They may also help with original internal features such as balustrades, and built in furniture.

Further information about these grants is contained in the booklet 'Do you qualify for a Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation grant?' available from the Heritage Foundation's office in The Spirella Building, Tel: 01462 476000.

## **Listed Building Grants**

The District Council has a discretionary grants budget, reviewed annually, to assist with the cost of repairs and preservation necessary to retain the special character of Listed Buildings. This includes repairs to the main building structure, wall and roof claddings with leadwork and rainwater goods, original features such as windows and doors and staircases and decorative features.

For further information about grants for Listed Building repairs, contact the Conservation Officers, North Hertfordshire District Council, Tel: 01462 474685.

Please note that applications for grants must be made and agreed before building work starts.

# How to apply for approvals

## What work to your home requires approval?

As a general rule, you need approval for anything which alters the external appearance of your property, including the replacement of roofs, windows and doors, and extends to the cutting down of trees or removal of hedges. There are particular safeguards in the case of Listed Buildings, which apply to both external and internal alterations. Ask before you build!

Staff at the Heritage Foundation and at the Council will each be able to tell you which works require the approval of their organisation, either under the ground lease or the Scheme of Management which covers your property in the case of the Heritage Foundation, or under planning legislation and Building Regulations in the case of the District Council. They will also be able to give you informal advice on what design and materials are likely to be acceptable, and whether a grant may be available to help with the cost.

### Contact:

Estates & Planning  
Property Department  
Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation  
Tel: 01462 476000

Planning Control  
North Hertfordshire District Council  
Tel: 01462 474206

Building Control  
North Hertfordshire District Council  
Tel: 01462 474000

## Making your application

You should apply direct to the Heritage Foundation for Landlord's consent:

Estates Planning  
Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation  
Suite 401  
The Spirella Building  
Letchworth  
Herts SG6 4ET

Where the Council's Approval is required you should obtain the appropriate forms from the Planning and/or Building Control Groups. Complete and return them, together with all the supplementary information and drawings required, to:

North Hertfordshire District Council  
Council Offices  
Gernon Road  
Letchworth  
Herts SG6 3JF

The forms will explain how many sets of drawings and what supplementary information is required for planning or Building Regulation purposes.

Clear and accurate drawings will be needed by both bodies so that they can give proper consideration to your application. Your application will be considered under national and local planning policies and guidelines by the District Council, and under the specific guidance and standards set out in this Design Guide, by both bodies. Your neighbours will also be consulted. However, it must be stressed that each application will be assessed on its individual merits. If your application is unsuccessful, both the Council and the Heritage Foundation will explain to you how you may seek a review of the decision.

Building Regulations approval is needed to ensure that the construction meets the relevant health and safety requirements.

## Find out more

### **Find out more**

You or your professional adviser are recommended to investigate the history of your property with the help of archive drawings available either at the Heritage Foundation's offices in The Spirella Building or at the First Garden City Heritage Museum on Norton Way South (Tel: 01462 482710).

### **The following publications may also be useful:**

Letchworth Conservation Area Booklet and Map – published jointly by NHDC & LGCHF

'Letchworth: The First Garden City' a history by Dr Mervyn Miller, revised edition to be published by Phillimore, 2002. First published in 1989.

'Do you qualify for a Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation grant?' – booklet published by LGCHF

This guide is published by Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation working in conjunction with North Hertfordshire District Council.

Published by:



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*proud past, bright future*

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