

GUIDELINES FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT

5. BOUNDARY TREATMENTS

5.1 1. Residential Properties

- **The Enclosure of Front Gardens**

When many estates in the Borough were given planning permission, to retain their 'open plan' appearance, the Borough Council felt it appropriate to take away the permitted development rights by which fences and means of enclosure could be erected. However, the Borough Council recognise the desire of householders for boundary demarcation of front gardens and low level (610 mm) boundary treatments will normally be acceptable on such estates. It will not normally be appropriate to allow higher fences (up to 1 metre) since there may not be adequate visibility at accesses, bends and corners to ensure that a satisfactory level of highway safety is achieved. When the original open plan estate layout was approved, visibility across the front garden areas would have been taken into account.

Where the permitted development rights have not been taken away a fence or other means of enclosure up to 1 metre high can be constructed along the highway boundary of a property without applying for planning permission and there is no restriction on the height to which a hedge or tree screen can grow. This permitted development maximum of 1 metre has been set in recognition that the front gardens of a property are normally regarded as only semi private open space because the landscaped area of a front garden and drive all contribute to the quality of the street scene. Taller, tree and hedge screens can provide more privacy without having an intrusive and detrimental impact on the street scene and are therefore acceptable.

The growing concern for security has lead to a number of applications being submitted for front and side garden walls or fences up to 2 metres or more in height. The Borough Council recognises the importance of security but considers that it is important to ensure that the visual appearance of the street scene is not harmed by the introduction of inappropriate walls/fences.

Throughout most of the Borough the Local Planning Authority considers that the most acceptable way to provide adequate security while retaining the quality of the street scene is for fences and walls (or combinations of them) abutting the highway to be restricted to 1 metre high unless the wall/fence is set back from the boundary by a metre and a landscape screen or hedge is grown in front of it. Railings may be permitted along the boundary provided a landscape screen of the same or a greater height is allowed to grow through them. It may be necessary for pedestrian visibility splays to be provided at driveway entrances in the interest of highway safety.

- **Front Boundary Treatments in Oadby Hill Top and its Environs**

In the Oadby Hill Top Conservation Area and the adjoining streets which have a recognisable open character (The Broadway east from its junction with The Fairway up to Manor Road, The Fairway eastwards from its junction with The Broadway including Ringers Spinney, Southmeads Close and Enysford Close) fences and /or walls will not normally be acceptable. In these location existing hedges shall be retained and where necessary reinforced.

In general the appearance of the boundary treatments of individual plots can be broken down into two broad types; (1) open, with the property bounded by a low wall or fence, this type of treatment is often backed by dense planting or; (2) enclosed, properties are bounded by hedges between 1.5 and 2 metres in height, these hedges may be backed by fences, walls or railings or have a low fence etc in front of them.

The street scene is made up of a mixture of this type of treatment. A predominance of either an open or enclosed frontages are visible along some streets and gives the individual street its appearance.

Enclosed boundaries by and large have a solid appearance, tall open railings and low walls surmounted by railings are therefore out of character with the area. Only where this type of feature is backed by a solid screen of vegetation will it conform with the general appearance of the surrounding enclosures and not be intrusive.

5.2 2. Commercial Premises

The quality of the urban street scene is just as important in the industrial areas of the Borough, particularly as many of the commercial premises adjoin well used roads and often face or back onto residential property. However the Borough Council recognises that security is a problem for these types of property particularly in areas like the Oadby Industrial estate where there is limited activity over the evening period.

- **The Need to have Regard to the Character of an Area**

Where new walls or fences are proposed which require planning permission, the Local Planning Authority will wish to ensure that the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on the visual environment. **Paragraphs 7.5 and 7.6 of the Local Plan** require new development to have regard to the character and land use of the surrounding areas. This could mean, for example, that it would be inappropriate for new fencing to be installed adjoining the highway boundary in an area where all the nearby premises had walls/fences set back from the boundary.

- **Choice of Materials**

Where it is appropriate for new fencing or other boundary treatments to be granted planning permission the Council will wish to ensure that the impact of the new boundary treatment is as little damaging to the visual environment as possible. **Landscape Proposal 1 (2)** requires that the building design, scale, form and materials should contribute positively to the overall quality of the environment and that it should be carefully related to existing development.

The choice of materials is particularly important when fences or walls are constructed. The materials should be chosen to give a pleasant appearance and identity to the scheme. They should be of a permanent texture and colour and should be designed for external use. The use of materials like galvanised metal will not be appropriate. Metal fences will need to be painted, preferably by treatment before they are erected. Walls will not be acceptable in common brick and long expanses of brick wall will need the introduction of brick detailing features to provide visual interest.