



Boundary Treatment

Supplementary Planning Document

January 2024

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1. Introduction

1.1 This document provides guidance on “boundary treatment” or “means of enclosure” around properties, commercial premises, schools and community uses, conservation areas and listed buildings within Sefton. This includes walls, fences, railings, hedges, trees, gates and any other feature that permanently encloses an area of land.

1.2 We provide advice throughout the document on which boundary treatment is most appropriate within certain settings. This document provides further detail to policies in the Local Plan, particularly EQ2 ‘design’. It does not have Development Plan status, but it will be accorded weight as a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications.

1.3 Planning applications will be assessed against the contents of this document, the Sefton Local Plan, the National Design Guide and the National Planning Policy Framework. In particular, Local Plan policy EQ2 “Design” will be used alongside this document in the determination of applications which incorporate boundary treatment.

2. Do you need planning permission?

2.1 Some boundary treatment does not require planning permission. Boundary treatment that is permitted development can be found in the General Permitted Development Order Schedule 2, Part 2, Class A-gates, fences, walls etc. Further information can be found on the following link:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/596/contents>

2.2 Planning permission will normally be required for boundary treatment that:-

- Is over 1 metre in height above ground level and is adjacent to a highway used by vehicular traffic.
- Is over 2 metres in height and is not adjacent to a highway used by vehicular traffic.
- Is enclosing or within the curtilage of a listed building.
- Is in an area covered by an article 4 direction that removes permitted development rights for boundary treatment.
- Is on a property where permitted development rights have been removed by way of a planning condition.

2.3 Within a conservation area permission may be required to take down a boundary.

3. Importance of well-designed boundary treatment

3.1 The materials used to provide boundaries are common features throughout both urban and rural settings. They can:

- Define areas of space and provide privacy, including through provision of soft landscaping (e.g. hedging)
- Provide security, contributing towards natural surveillance and safety
- Link buildings with the wider landscape

- Clearly define what is public from what is private
- Provide a better outlook (i.e. hide an unattractive view).
- Add interest to a streetscene.

3.2 Where an application is received, the main issues we are likely to consider are:-

- Design, appearance, materials
- Impact on the character of the street scene (its suitability in the locality)
- Function
- Highway and public safety
- Impact on neighbours

3.3 A boundary must balance privacy, safety and security against what it looks like. Similarly, the need for security does not outweigh other relevant considerations such as its appearance and its impact on local amenity. What is considered appropriate in one location may not in another.

3.4 When re-instating a boundary treatment that has been lost, particularly within a conservation area, it is important that it reflect the historic character of the area.

4. Highway safety

4.1 A boundary which hinders vision onto a highway is unacceptable. For example, if it prevents a car being able to be safely driven out of a private driveway across the pavement it will not be acceptable. See Sefton's [highway developer pack](#) for more information.

5. Boundary treatment within residential areas

5.1 Throughout Sefton, boundaries contribute toward the character of the area. For example, many 19th century developments within the borough have low level brick or sandstone walls along their front boundaries. It is important that proposals for new or replacement boundaries in residential areas respect the character of the area.

5.2 Proposals that include new or replacement boundary treatment within residential areas should adhere to the following principles:

- a) The height, design and materials used should relate to the character of the local area (see paragraph 5.3 below).
- b) The proposed boundary should be safe and not harm highway safety.
- c) Materials should complement the host building.
- d) An overly high boundary between properties can decrease the living conditions enjoyed by a neighbour. Ideally boundaries between front gardens should not exceed the height of the front facing boundary.
- e) Front boundary gates must be in proportion to the height of the rest of the front boundary.
- f) Boundaries that can be seen from the public realm should be of a high- quality design.

g) The use of dangerous or unsafe materials along boundaries will not be permitted within residential areas. This includes the use of razor wire, barbed wire, broken glass or metal palisade fencing with spiked pales.

h) Materials such as unrendered blockwork, concrete panels, perforated blocks and industrial security fencing are inappropriate within a residential setting and will not be permitted, particularly if this can be viewed from the street or other public areas.

5.3 The following is a general guide on what boundary treatment will be encouraged within residential areas, providing they fit in with the street scene and the character of the wider area.

Low Metal Railings

Low railings (including those on a low wall) provide a tidy treatment, usually along front boundaries, that contribute towards the character of an area. They also ensure a level of natural surveillance and provide a physical barrier to increase the safety of the host property. Many of Sefton's historic and older areas have low railings along their boundaries.

Appropriate uses

Front boundary.

Low Brick Walls

Low brick walls can reinforce the street scene and provide a visual extension of the host property. They can define the boundary of the curtilage and provide a physical barrier between the public and private realm.

Appropriate uses

Front boundary.

Low Timber Fence

Low picket and post and rail fences can be complemented with soft landscaping. Timber is prone to rotting and extra care should be taken to timber fencing along front boundaries to prevent rotting, which looks unattractive and can place extra burden on the owner.

Appropriate uses

Front boundary

High Brick Walls

High brick walls can provide security and a visual extension of the host property. High brick walls will generally only be permitted on the public highway where they are a designed feature of the street scene and only then if they do not compromise highway safety.

Appropriate uses

Rear gardens in visible locations.

Corner properties.

Stone/ Artificial stone walls

Stone and artificial stone walls can enhance a street scene through a rustic effect in appropriate locations whilst providing a solid boundary treatment.

Appropriate uses

Front boundary.

Soft Landscaping

The visual impact of fences and walls, both on the host property and on the street scene can be softened through the use of plants including hedges. Species used should be chosen carefully and maintained to prevent them overhanging the public highway. This should be no higher than 1m along front boundaries to ensure highway safety.

Appropriate uses

Front boundary. Corner properties. Rear gardens.

Timber Infill

Timber infills, including infill panels above a low brick wall and between brick piers, can comprise a high-quality design and provide a necessary level of privacy and security.

Appropriate uses

Corner properties, behind the building line to the front elevation.

Rear gardens visible from the public realm

High Timber Fence

High timber fences are relatively low priced and can provide a satisfactory level of privacy and security.

Appropriate uses

Rear boundaries which do not front the public realm.

Blockwork (e.g. breeze blocks) including perforated blocks

Blockwork boundary treatment is considered to be bulky and unsympathetic to residential street scenes.

Appropriate uses

If rendered, rear boundaries that do not front the public realm.

Concrete panels

Concrete panel fencing will often damage the appearance of a property and the area in which it is located.

Appropriate uses

There are existing concrete panel fences in areas such as rear alleyways. However, new concrete panel fences are likely to be considered unacceptable.

6. Boundary treatment for commercial properties

6.1 We acknowledge commercial properties may hold expensive stock or equipment that is often left unsupervised at night. However, a balance needs to be struck between security and general amenity, particularly if the boundary can be seen from public areas. There are many suitable fencing systems that are both attractive and secure.

6.2 Within residential areas and other areas well-used by the public, such as shopping areas, commercial properties that front onto roads should avoid positioning unattractive security fencing along the street. If secure fencing is essential on a frontage, it should be of a quality design which enhances the street scene.

6.3 The following is a general guide on what boundary treatment will be permissible in principle for commercial properties, provided they do that cause significant harm to the street scene or character of the area. The guidance provided in the rest of the document should be used in unison with the guide below.

Palisade fencing

Powder coated palisade fencing provides a level of security and surveillance and is appropriate for industrial estates. However, is not considered a suitable design for a commercial property in a residential area due to impacts on the street scene.

Appropriate uses

- Commercial properties within a residential area, where the fencing would be positioned out of view of the public realm
- For Commercial properties within an industrial estate.

Mesh type fencing

Powder coated mesh fencing can provide a level of security and surveillance. It is appropriate as a boundary treatment for commercial properties on industrial estates and may be appropriate for residential areas depending on the character of the immediate area.

Appropriate uses

- Commercial properties within a residential area.
- For Commercial properties within an industrial estate.

Brick walls

Brick walls provide security and can be of a high-quality level of design. They are appropriate for commercial properties, subject to suitable design, in residential areas.

Appropriate uses

- Commercial properties in residential areas so long as highway safety is maintained.
- For Commercial properties within an industrial estate

Iron railings

Iron railings can provide security, a level of surveillance and can be of a high-quality level of design. They are appropriate for commercial properties in residential areas.

Appropriate uses

- Commercial properties in residential areas.

Raised planters

Raised planters can enhance the street scene. They can be appropriate for frontages on commercial properties in residential areas.

Appropriate uses

- Commercial properties in residential areas.

7. School and community use boundary treatment

7.1 Boundary treatment around schools and other community uses (e.g. doctors' surgeries, hospitals, community centres, scout halls, sports clubs, playing fields, care homes) have a greater emphasis on safety. The uses often require a physical barrier which deters unauthorised persons from accessing or looking into a site. Boundaries around schools and other community uses should ensure the safety of their users and should be designed in a manner which reflects the context of the specific site and its surroundings.

7.2 Schools or other community uses, that have an established frontage which comprise an existing steel or iron railing or a boundary brick or stone wall, should ensure these are retained where possible. Where a school or other community use has an established frontage, but needs additional security, preference may be given to increasing the height of the existing railing or the height of existing brick or stone wall using appropriate material, subject to design and residential amenity.

7.3 If new security fencing is needed, it would be appropriate to set the security fencing back within the site or along the rear, leaving the original boundary treatment to the front on public view. This will ensure the property maintains its positive contribution to the street scene. The secondary level of new fencing will be less intrusive.

8. Car park boundary treatment

8.1 We advise that car park boundaries should allow for natural surveillance by maximising visibility into the car park.

8.2 Car park boundaries should be appropriately designed so as not to cause harm to the character of the surrounding area.

9. Conservation areas and listed buildings

9.1 Proposals to amend a boundary treatment within a conservation area will be permitted where they preserve or enhance the character of the area or reinstate historic boundary features that have been lost. In Conservation Areas boundaries frequently play an important part in contributing to the significance of the area and are often unique in design and quality.

9.2 Permission is required for the erection, alteration or demolition of any wall, gate, fence and other means of enclosure within the curtilage of a listed building. Planning permission and listed building consent are required for gates, walls, fences and other means of enclosure within the curtilage of or which form a boundary to a listed building.

9.3 Properties within a conservation area may be subject to additional controls. It is important you check whether your property is in an “Article 4 Direction” area, as these may remove permitted development rights for boundary treatment. Article 4 Directions within Sefton can be found on the following link:

<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning-building-control/planning-policy-including-local-plan-and-neighbourhood-planning/>

9.4 Conservation area appraisals provide guidance of what boundary treatment may be acceptable in your area. These can be found by following the link:

<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning-building-control/conservation-and-heritage/conservation-areas.aspx>

10. Water courses/canals

10.1 Boundaries fronting a canal should respect or enhance the perception of openness on the canal corridor.

10.2 Closed boarded fencing and palisade fencing will not be permitted along the canal corridor. In areas along the canal corridor which are predominantly fronted by closed boarded or palisade fencing, new proposals should take the opportunity to enhance the area by removing such fencing.

11. Ecology

11.1 We encourage the use of ecology friendly boundary treatment. This can include:

- Badger gates
- Planting schemes
- Water Vole/Newt/Hedgehog fences in all appropriate areas.
- Bat boxes

11.2 When designing boundary treatment, you should consider the movement of hedgehogs. Hedgehogs need to be able to move freely between gardens to be able to flourish. Therefore, new boundary treatment between gardens and in other appropriate areas must allow for the unimpeded movement of hedgehogs. This should include small purpose-built gaps for the hedgehogs to get through. Examples can be viewed here:

<https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/link-your-garden/>

An exception to this is where fences abut roads, or if the fence needs to provide protection from excessive noise levels.

12. Trees and hedges

12.1 Your proposal should avoid causing harm to existing mature trees and hedges. This could be achieved through:

- a) Providing adequate distance between the development and mature trees and hedges.
- b) Adopting construction methods that reduce the potential impact on trees.

12.2 A boundary treatment that is likely to affect a tree will require an Arboricultural survey as part of a planning application.

12.3 Development proposals must replace any trees lost as a result of development at a ratio of 1:1 within the site.

12.4 Some trees are protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). It is an offence to cut down, lop, uproot, wilfully damage or wilfully destroy a tree covered by a TPO without the permission of the Local Planning Authority (except for specified exemptions). For more information on TPO'S please see the following webpage:

<http://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning-building-control/apply-for-planning-permission/tree-preservation.aspx#faq1>

12.5 Significant hedge removal may not be supported. Where there is an existing hedge along a boundary, consideration should be given to positioning new fencing or walls behind the existing hedge.

12.6 Certain hedgerows are protected. Removing a protected hedgerow without permission of the Local Planning Authority is an offence. Information on protected hedgerows can be found on the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/countryside-hedgerows-regulation-and-management>

13. Sustainability

13.1 In line with the Waste Local Plan for Merseyside (2013) construction and demolition methods should be used that minimise waste production and encourage re-use and recycling materials, as far as practicable on-site.

14. Enforcement

14.1 If a boundary treatment is placed without the required permission, we may take enforcement action. We will act where it is practical, reasonable, and necessary to do so in the wider public interest.