

Open Fronts

A guide to Harlow Council's Policy

Harlow New Town was originally designed so that front gardens would be “open” in appearance – with no fences, walls, intrusions or parking of any vehicle. However, changes over the years have meant that, in some cases, Harlow Council has started to relax these policies.

This leaflet gives details of the council's policies on open fronts (for “Parking on Front Gardens” – see separate leaflet) and guidance on how you might be able to make changes to your front garden, and where to go for further information.

Covenants

If you are a homeowner in Harlow it is very likely that there are covenants on the deeds of your property that may restrict you from carrying out certain work, including alterations to your front garden.

If the covenant is controlled by Harlow Council, you will need to follow the guidelines in this leaflet before making any changes to your garden.*

If there are no covenants you should be able to carry out any work to your garden*

Note: if you are unsure whether there are any covenants on your property, inspect the deeds or seek legal advice.

*This does not give you consent to carry out any other work to your property. You may still need to seek planning permission or building regulation approval for other works.

Where to begin

Before you start, you need to find out the depth of your garden. This measurement is the distance from your house to the boundary line of your property (i.e. the end of your front garden where it meets the path/road).

The following classifications must be followed when applying these guidelines to your property.

Garden depth (in metres)	Garden classification
Less than 5m	Small front garden
More than 5m and up to 10m	Medium front garden
More than 10m	Large front garden

Landscaping

You may decide that you want to landscape your front garden. Front garden landscapes may be either hard or soft.

Hard Landscapes

If you want to build a hard landscape it must be constructed from one of the following materials:

- Block and / or brick paving
- Textured paving (e.g. crazy, York stone)
- Paving slabs
- Patterned concrete
- Flexible (tarmac)
- Shingle (contained within a hard edge)

(If you want to construct a hard standing to park your car on, you must seek permission first (see our leaflet on “Parking on Front Gardens”)

The building of a hard landscape is also restricted by the depth of your garden – you may only have a hard landscape as a percentage of the total area of your garden:

Small Garden	-	up to 75%
Medium Garden	-	up to 75%
Large Garden	-	up to 50%

Soft Landscapes

If you want to build a soft landscape it must be constructed from one of the following materials:

- Grass
- Shrubs, herbaceous and annuals*
- Specimen plants*
- Hedges*
- Trees (see below)

*Where these items form a border with a public footpath or right of way, the height will be restricted to a maximum of 600mm. If the public footpath is next to an adopted highway, the height restriction must be followed exactly.

Walls

You can put up ornamental, self-supporting, retaining or container walls up to a maximum height of 300mm (approx. 1ft)

Fences

You do not need to apply for covenant consent for fences to the open front provided they do not exceed 600mm in height. Fences higher than 600mm will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances and consideration to sight lines for all traffic will be a concern for which a consultation with the Council traffic engineer will be required.

Gates

Single gates will be allowed to a maximum height of 750mm but they must be restrained and fitted so that they only open into the garden.

Trees

If the edge of any proposed work is within 750mm of a tree trunk it cannot be carried out.

Remember

It is your responsibility to comply with the guidelines. If you do not follow them, the council reserves the right to insist you return your garden to its original condition.

If you want to carry out any other work to your garden you may need to get planning permission, building control approval or covenant approval from the council Planning and Building Control Service.

Contact details; **Contact Harlow**
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The Water Gardens
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