

## Front garden parking

Removing front garden areas to create off street parking is not recommended. The loss of the garden area damages the appearance (and value) of your house, and the street as a whole.

From 1 October 2008 the permitted development rights that allow householders to pave their front garden for hard standing without planning permission have changed. **Planning permission is now required** to lay traditional **impermeable** driveways that allow uncontrolled runoff of rainwater from front gardens onto roads, because this can contribute to flooding and pollution of watercourses.

If a new driveway or parking area is constructed using permeable surfaces such as permeable concrete block paving, porous asphalt or gravel, or if the water is otherwise able to soak into the ground **you will not require planning permission**. The new rules will also apply where existing hard standings are being replaced. The new rules apply to hard surfaces exceeding 5 square metres in area.

Applying for planning permission to Wirral Borough Council will require you to fill in an application form, draw plans (which have to be to scale) and pay a fee of £150. Planning applications for this type of householder development should normally be decided within 8 weeks after submission.

If there is no alternative to a hard standing area in your front garden then think carefully about the design to save costs and reduce the environmental damage.

***There are 4 main ways of constructing a hard standing area that is permeable and will not require planning permission.***

### ***Gravel:***

This is the most simple type of construction. The driveway sub-base is covered by a surface layer of gravel or shingle. Gravel with different shapes and colours is available to make the surface more decorative. A strip of block paving or asphalt at the entrance can limit the loss and spread of gravel from the drive.

There are a number of systems available that stabilise the gravel so that cars can drive over it without causing ruts. They also allow wheelie bins and wheelchairs to travel over the gravel. Both plastic and concrete reinforcement systems are available to strengthen the ground and eliminate movement. Some systems allow the gravel to be replaced by soil in which grass is sown. This looks like a grassed area but is firm and durable enough to take car traffic. Specific low growing grass that does not need a lot of mowing can be used. (see links to some suppliers below in "Further Information")

### ***Hard permeable and porous surfaces:***

Hard surfacing which allows water to soak into it can be built with porous asphalt, porous concrete blocks, concrete or clay block permeable paving. The material has open voids across the surface of the material or around the edges of blocks that allow water to soak in. The surface is constructed over a permeable sub-base.

Both of these methods ***need a permeable sub-base***. The materials used in permeable construction are different to those used in impermeable driveway construction. Both types of surface have a sub-base layer used to make the ground strong enough to carry cars without rutting.

Conventionally surfaced driveways use a sub-base material called hardcore or a material called MOT Type 1 by contractors. This has a lot of fine material in it (sand and silt) that stops water passing through it easily. For permeable and porous driveways different materials are required that allow water to pass through and also store the water for a while if it cannot soak into the ground as fast as the rain falls. Various materials are available and two examples are known as 4/20 and Type 3 sub-base. These materials are described as open graded and consist only of larger pieces of stone that have space between to store water.

### ***Minimal car track:***

Two parallel rows of stone flags or stone setts (which if less than 5 Square metres can be impermeable) can accommodate the car wheels, retaining ground cover plants or grass elsewhere. Alternatively the area can be finished with gravel. Either method gives a softer and more attractive effect than broad expanses of concrete or tarmac.

### ***Rain Gardens and Soakaways:***

Water from an impermeable paved surface can be directed onto a border, rain garden or into a soakaway. An area of garden can be formed into a depression to collect and store rainwater from conventional impermeable surfaces (asphalt, concrete and block paving), before slowly allowing it to soak into the ground or to flow to the drains. The depressions can be located along the edge of the drive or as a larger area in the garden at a low point. The depression can be planted with suitable plants to help slow runoff or gravel or cobbles can be used as decorative features. There may be a gravel filled trench below it to increase the storage capacity and allow water to soak into the ground more easily. Soakaways are a similar idea except that water is piped into a gravel filled trench or geocellular box (see Glossary) and allowed to soak into the ground. Many houses have the roof downpipes connected to soakaways. They are more suitable for houses with larger front gardens as they require space and need to be located a suitable distance from buildings

***Further information:***

**The Royal Horticultural Society** produces an excellent leaflet on the design of front garden parking areas – it is available free on their web site, <http://www.rhs.org.uk>

**The Dept of Communities and Local Government** have produced comprehensive booklet which sets out the rationale for these new rules and contains sound advice on how to design and build a permeable hard standing. It also contains links to other sources of advice.

The booklet, called “Guidance on the permeable surfacing of front gardens”, (September 2008) is available to download from:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pavingfrontgardens>

and hard copies (Product Code: 08 COMM 05532 ISBN: 978-1-4098-0485-7) can be ordered free from:

Communities and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU  
Telephone: 020 7944 4400

**Layout & design specifications**

<http://www.drivewaytips.com/layout.html>

**Links to suppliers** that specialise in reinforced gravel systems.

<http://www.grasscrete.com/index.asp>

<http://www.gridforce.co.uk>

<http://www.nidagravel.co.uk>

<http://www.geotechnics-uk>

**General advice** on surface materials

<http://www.pavingexpert.com/cellpav1.htm>