

# Garden Ground



Very generally, our role in Fife Council is to assess planning applications, complaints and appeals. We do this by considering guidelines such as those in this leaflet. The guidelines reflect local and national planning policies and laws.

Fife Council has delegated powers to officers to approve or reject planning permission. We use these powers to decide a large number of planning applications.

Other applications are decided by elected members of Fife Council, also on the basis of planning laws, policies and issues. In these cases, our role is to assess the planning application and recommend approving or refusing planning permission.

When councillors approve planning permission they often impose conditions. These might cover, for example, what materials you can or cannot use. Our job is to make sure developers and house builders meet these conditions.

## What We Consider

If you are in any doubt about an aspect of planning, we recommend that you seek further advice before proceeding with your proposal.

When we are considering a planning application for new housing developments or home extensions, we ensure enough space has been set aside for gardens.

## The main principles we use

We are guided by four principles:

- A good size of garden that is well located plays an important part in people's quality of life and in the quality of the area they live in.
- Gardens should be big enough for everyday activities such as hanging up the washing and for children to play. They are also the land in which a property is set, which makes them one of the features that makes an area a nice place to live.
- Gardens should fit the needs of the people who live there; they should not be too large or too small. We must remember that land is

an important natural resource and we must use it carefully.

- Gardens should not be too close together and appear cramped. These are unlikely to be in keeping with the area surrounding the houses and will not meet people's expectations.

## How we decide if a garden is big enough

To help us make sure we take the same approach to every application, we use a formula to help us decide whether the space set aside for gardens meets our guidelines. We call this formula the plot ratio approach. This is how it works:

- Every new house, or house that is being extended, must have a minimum size of garden.
- We work out this minimum area based on the size of the house and garage (we call this its building footprint) and the size of the total area of land. If there is no garage, we consider the size of the house alone.
- For new houses, the ratio of buildings to garden must be at least 1:3, but we do not rule out larger plot ratios, such as 1:4 or greater.

## What You Need To Consider New Housing Developments

Front gardens must be at least 4.5 metres deep to give residents privacy. This is measured from the edge of the building to the property's boundary. If part of the house extends beyond the main building and has a window in it, for example a porch or an extension, we measure from the edge of that part of the building.

- Back gardens must be at least nine metres long to create a private area. If two gardens back onto one another, there must be at least 18 metres between the buildings.

If the wall of a back room that someone could live in has no windows facing the back, the nine metre or 18-metre minimum may be reduced.

But we must be sure that the wall does not cast a shadow over or appear overbearing from a neighbouring house.

- Detached and semi-detached houses must have at least 100 square metres of usable garden. Typically this would be at the back of the house but, if it is not, it should still provide privacy.
- If a mid-terrace house has no access at the rear for vehicles, we work out the plot ratio without allowing for a garage.

#### Flats

- Flats must be set in, or have at least 50 square metres of private garden for each flat. This does not include space for garages, parking or manoeuvring vehicles.
- We work out distances from flats to roads or other buildings on in the same way as for new houses.
- Flats higher than two storeys must be further apart from each other and from neighbouring properties.

#### Other kinds of residential development

- The plot ratio for new residential homes, for example for elderly people, must be the same as for other properties in the area they are being built. If you are unsure what this is, please ask us.
- If there are no other properties to base the ratio on, you should use a ratio of at least 1:2, where the area of garden is at least twice the size of the building footprint and car parking area. Your calculation should not include access roads or areas needed for vehicles, such as delivery lorries, to turn (these are also known as service areas).

#### Infill sites (land which is currently unused in an area)

If you are building on an infill site in an established residential area, you must retain or enhance the character of the area. You could do this by using local building materials or building in a similar style to other homes. This is especially important if you are building in a conservation area or in densely populated area.

We expect the plot ratio to be in keeping with properties in the surrounding area. But we may relax these plot ratios in some circumstances.

Examples are as follows:

- You are converting a listed or redundant building into homes and its design means it is

worth keeping, even if it is not in a conservation area.

- Your proposals are in an area Fife Council has identified for physical regeneration, for example, by improving run-down buildings.
- We consider your proposals are of outstandingly high quality, in terms of their overall design, layout and density - that is, how the proposal fits into the neighbouring area.
- The site is derelict or poor quality land and your plans will significantly improve the local area. You must be able to show us that a reduced plot ratio is needed for the scheme to go ahead. To do this you must give us full information about the project costs. We will not take into account if you have paid a high price for the land.

#### Home extensions

If you plan to extend your home, and will lose some of your garden as a result, the extension must not:

- reduce the garden's usefulness;
- reduce your neighbours' quality of life, for example by blocking out the sun from, or overlooking their garden; or
- harm the quality of the local environment.

Many houses were built before we introduced these standards and we will take this into account. The extension must not take up more than 25% of your original, private garden (normally at the back of your home).



Original usable private garden ground

Combined areas should not exceed 25% of original usable private garden ground

You must take into account any previous extensions and garages when you are working this out. You'll also have to meet our guidelines on house extensions. You will need a copy of our leaflet on house extensions to make sure your plans meet these guidelines.

We'll consider relaxing our planning guidelines on gardens if the extension will:

- add, for the first time, standard amenities such as a bathroom or kitchen to your home;
- bring the property above the tolerable living standard we would expect; or
- provide a home for a person with long-term disability.

### **Wheeled bins**

- New gardens and buildings must be designed so residents do not have to move wheeled refuse bins through the inside of the house to put them out for collection at the side of the road.
- Sufficient space must be allowed for adequate storage of wheeled bins.

### **Windows opposite each other**

- Plain, glazed windows directly opposite each other in different buildings must be at least 18 metres apart to make sure residents have privacy.
- If there is a road or pavement between the buildings, or a permanent, high barrier that blocks the view, this distance can be less.
- We may accept lesser distances for oblique windows (windows set at an angle, rather than directly facing each other) or windows opposite each other but at different heights to each other.

### **Distances between buildings**

- Contact us if you want to find out more about distances between buildings. (See appendix A.)

Reviewed March 2016

## Minimum distances between window openings

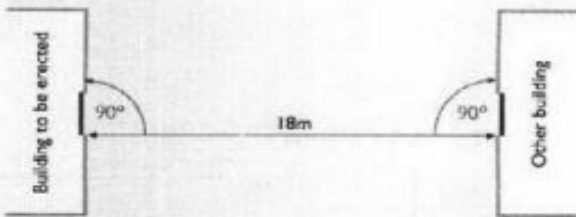
		Angle at window of <i>building to be erected</i> not more than									
		90°	80°	70°	60°	50°	40°	30°	20°	10°	0°
Angle at window of <i>any other building</i> not more than	90°	18	18	18	18	13	9	6	4	3	2
	80°	18	18	18	13	9	6	4	3	2	
	70°	18	18	13	9	6	4	3	2		
	60°	18	13	9	6	4	3	2			
	50°	13	9	6	4	3	2				
	40°	9	6	4	3	2					
	30°	6	4	3	2						
	20°	4	3	2							
	10°	3	2								
	0°	2									

DISTANCES IN METRES

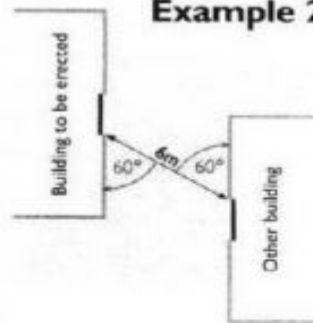
**NOTE**

- 'Angle' means the horizontal angle included between:
  - the shortest line joining any part of one window opening to any part of the other
  - the vertical plane of the opening of the window
- Distances shall be interpolated for intermediate angles

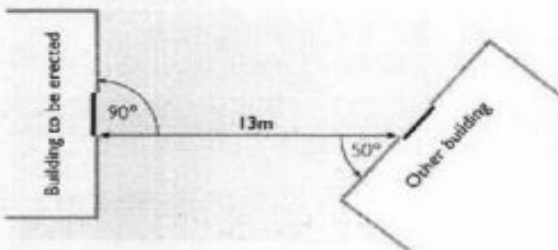
**Example 1**



**Example 2**



**Example 3**



**Example 4**

