

Garden Walls etc

Garden walls etc are not controlled by the Building Regulations. Building Control however does have powers to remove or make safe garden walls etc if they are considered to be dangerous.

Please consider the following:

Garden and boundary walls should be inspected from time to time to see if any repairs are necessary, or whether a wall needs rebuilding. Such walls are amongst the most common forms of masonry to suffer collapse, and they are unfortunately one of the commonest causes of death by falling masonry.

Besides the general deterioration and ageing of a wall over the years, walls may be affected by:

- An increase in wind load or driving rain if a nearby wall is taken down.
- Felling of nearby mature trees or planting of new trees close to the wall.
- Changes leading to greater risk of damage from traffic.
- Alterations, such as additions to the wall or removal of parts of the wall e.g. a new gateway.

Things to check

- **Is the surface of the brickwork crumbling away?**

If restricted to a few bricks this may not be serious but walls can be weakened by general crumbling across either face.

- **Is the mortar pointing in good condition?**

If the hard surface layer can be picked out from the joint, or if the mortar can easily be scraped out with, say, a door key, then this is a good indication that the wall may need repointing.

- **Is there a tree near the wall?**

As trees mature, there is a risk of the wall being damaged by the roots, and from wind-blown branches. Damaged sections may have to be re-built, perhaps with bridges incorporated to carry the wall over the roots. Removal of large trees can also lead to problems because the soil accumulates more moisture and expands.

- **Is the wall upright?**

Walls lean for a variety of causes, due for example to failure below ground caused by tree roots, a cracked drain, frost damage to the foundations or inadequate foundations. If your wall leans to an extent that could present a danger e.g. more than 30mm (half brick wall), 70mm (single brick wall) or 100mm (brick and a half wall) it is recommended that expert advice is sought. This may involve checking of the wall foundations.

- **Is the wall thick enough for its height?**

The table below gives guidance on how high walls should be relative to their thickness. Seek expert advice if your wall exceeds the recommended height, or in circumstances whereby this guidance is inapplicable e.g. walls incorporating piers, or walls supporting heavy gates or retaining soil.

Thickness	Recommended Max. height
½ Brick (100mm)	525mm
1 Brick (215mm)	1450mm
1½ Brick (325mm)	2400mm
100mm Block	450mm
200mm Block	1050mm
300mm Block	2000mm

- **Some climbing plants, like ivy, can damage walls of growth is unchecked.**

Consider cutting them back and supporting re-growth clear of the wall.

- **Is the top of the wall firmly attached?**

Brick cappings or concrete copings may be loose or there may be horizontal cracks (frost damage) in the brickwork a few courses down. Loose or damaged masonry near the top of the wall will need to be rebuilt and should include a damp proof course.

- **Has the wall been damaged by traffic?**

Minor scratch marks or scoring of the surface may obscure more significant cracks. Piers at vehicular entrances may have been dislodged by impact and be unsafe; in such cases they should be rebuilt.

- **Are there any cracks in the wall?**

Hairline cracks (0-2mm across) are common in walls and may not indicate serious problems. For wider cracks seek expert advice; some may indicate a need for partial or complete rebuilding. Seek advice on any horizontal cracks which pass right through a wall or any cracks close to piers or gates. Repointing of cracks can lead to problems. Do not repoint without establishing the cause of the cracking.

Planning Permission

You will need to apply for planning permission if you wish to erect or add to a fence, wall or gate and:

- It would be over 1 metre high and next to a highway used by vehicles (or the footpath of such a highway); or over 2 metres high elsewhere; or
- Your right to put up or alter fences, walls and gates is removed by an article 4 direction (development rights) or a planning condition; or
- Your house is a listed building or in the curtilage of a listed building.

Normally you will **not** need to apply for planning permission to take down a fence, wall or gate, or to alter or improve an existing fence, wall or gate (no matter how high) if you don't increase its height. However if your building is **listed** or in a **conservation area** you might need listed building or conservation area consent to take down a fence, wall or gate.

Note:

Under the [Party Wall Act 1996](#) you are obliged to consult with neighbours where your garden wall affects the boundary.

Please note that these guidance notes are for advice only and may not cover all situations. It is your responsibility to ensure that they are appropriate for use in your particular circumstance.