



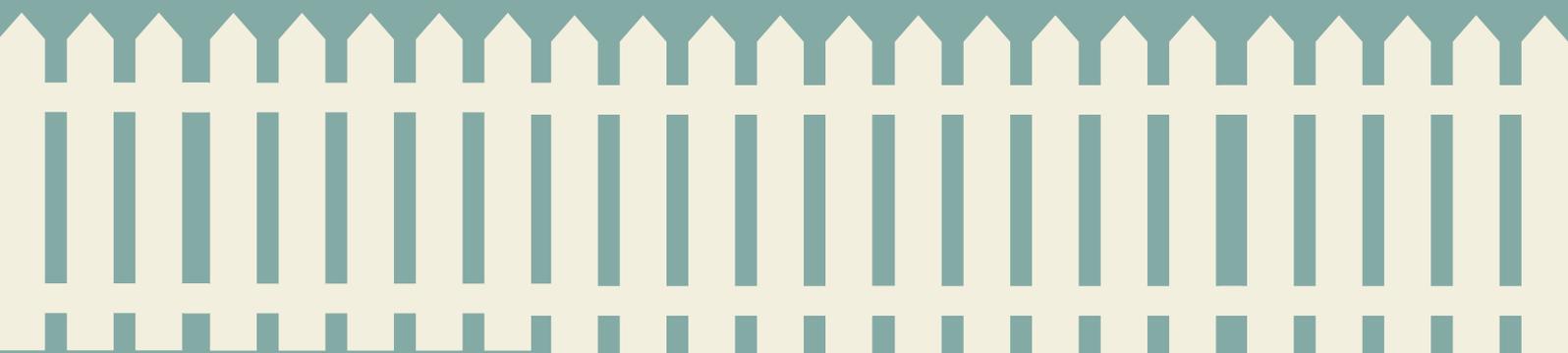
Your guide to enclosing your front garden

Introduction

Here at Merthyr Valleys Homes we have been looking at ways we can continue to embed our mutual values across our organisation and our communities. Through our mutual we have given tenants a stronger voice and one thing that is evident from speaking to you, is that you want to be proud of your homes and the areas in which you live.

You elected a Democratic Body of tenants and employees to set the strategy and vision for us. This vision is 'YFory' and copies can be found on our website if you follow this link: www.mvhomes.org.uk/corporate-information

One of the key aims was how together we could create greater pride in our communities and allow people to take more responsibility for their home, and their community.



Creating your own front garden

Many of the houses and flats we own were built in the late 1960s and have open plan front gardens. These homes often have enclosed rear gardens but the front doors open onto communal paths or open plan grassed areas. Many tenants have told us they would like to enclose their communal front garden, creating private gardens and spaces to be cared for, looked after and enjoyed.

We hope this change in allowing people to enclose and look after their own front gardens will help make our neighbourhoods look better and feel safer.

This short guide will help you to enclose the communal front garden to your homes and provide tips on how to do this in line with the rules and regulations of planning and highway controls.

Before you submit an application

Read the guide in full

Discuss your ideas with your neighbour

Complete the online application form – providing details of the work you wish to complete

Wait to receive approval before you begin the work

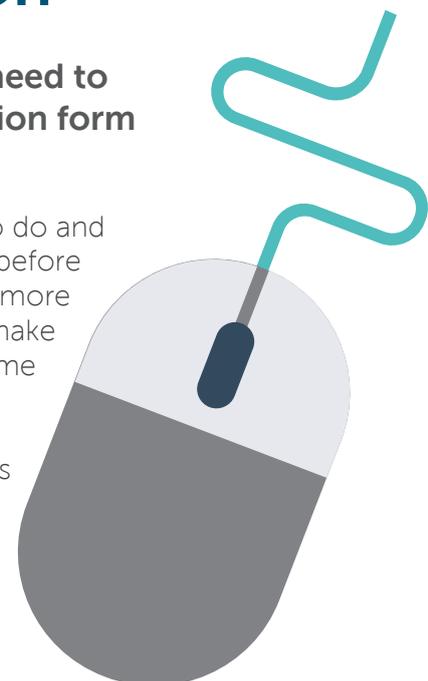
A simple but online only permission

Please be aware that this guide is not permission and you will need to go on line at www.mvhomes.org.uk and complete the application form before you begin any work.

If you do not have access to the internet visit our office, where you can use our free access computers and we will be able to help you fill the form in online.

We want to make this process as simple as possible and do not intend to put up any unnecessary barriers to you creating the space that you want; but equally we are sure that we will all want the areas to look as nice as possible and will not want dangerous and badly built walls and fences dotted across our communities. We will therefore expect you to

tell us what you intend to do and how you will be doing it before you begin the work. The more complex you decide to make the boundary to your home the more detail we will want and we will expect you to have the right skills or people to complete your project to a high standard.



Enclosing your communal front garden

We think most people understand the meaning of communal front gardens but we will explain our definitions and give you some visual guides to help.

Open Plan Front Garden:

We are now going to allow tenants to enclose the area between **the front of their home right up to a communal path or pavement.**

This picture shows some of our properties where the Boundary is quite natural and easy to identify.

The boundary between two properties is not always as easy to define. Once your application has been received; **if you are building a wall or a fence; before work commences, we will attend your property and agree your boundary.** You won't need to be at home for this visit but we will let you know when we will be calling.



Please be aware that we do not give permission for any type of boundary to be fixed directly to the property or any existing boundaries.

What is not covered within this guide?



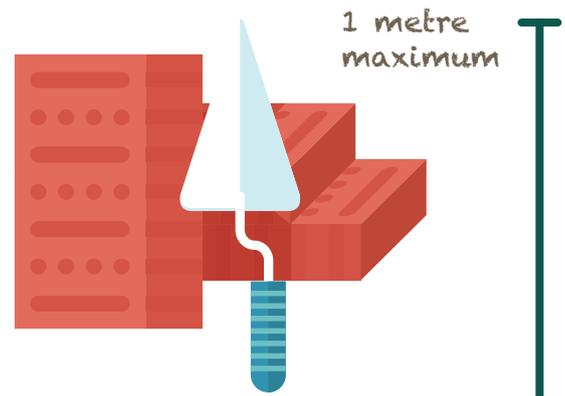
This guide **does not** inform you how to gain permission to install a hard standing for a vehicle boat or caravan and you will have to apply separately to install a hard standing in your front garden. Building a hard standing without permission from ourselves is a breach of your Tenancy Agreement. Our separate permission process for a hard standing also requires you to obtain both planning and building regulation approval from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

Planning and building regulations permission

If you follow these guidelines for enclosing your front garden you will not require either planning or building regulations approval.

However **if you choose to build something outside of these guidelines you will need specific permission from us and you be required to obtain planning and building regulation permission from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council at your own risk and expense.**

To be able to create an enclosure without applying for planning permission it must be **no higher than 1 metre and it must not block or impinge onto any public footpaths.**



There are different guidelines if the boundary of your front garden runs directly to a road junction as there are very specific requirements of the highways authorities when you reduce visibility at a junction. When using our online application for permission you can inform us that you live on a junction and we will then arrange to visit your property, to discuss the requirement further.

i You can find further advice regarding Planning and Building Control online, following this link; www.merthyr.gov.uk/resident/planning-building-control

Keeping good relations with your neighbours

In applying for permission to build walls/fences to enclose communal areas it is important you discuss the boundary between your and your neighbour's property with them.

As part of the online permission application we ask you to confirm that you have discussed and agreed the proposal with the neighbours. We believe most people are sensible and will want to agree the right approach. If you work together it may be cheaper and easier to agree the boundary, the design solution and you may be able to share the cost if you both wish to do the work.

We will not always check if you have the support of your neighbours for your plans but if you build something without their

support, outside of these guidelines or to a poor quality and they object we can ask you to remove it.

We will however support you where their permission has been unreasonably declined and the Party Wall Act 1996 will apply.

Please note if your neighbour is not a MVH tenant then you may not be able to enclose your shared boundary as the land may be owned by your neighbour.

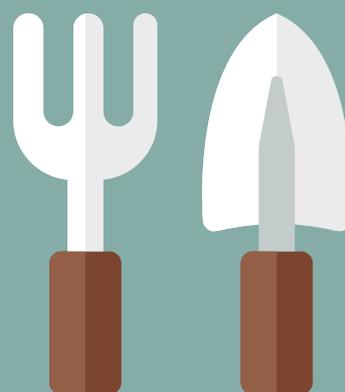


Responsibilities

By enclosing your front garden you will have made the decision to look after the area yourself. This is important as although it will be your garden, if it is not looked after it will affect everyone in your community. Below is a list of your responsibilities;

- **The cost of enclosing the garden will need to be covered by you the tenant and not Merthyr Valleys Homes.**
- **You will maintain the garden to a good standard and will be expected to cut your own grass and hedging; if this garden layout you choose.**
- **You will be responsible for checking the safety of the fence or wall and reporting any problems to us; if you do not plan on correcting them yourself.**

Once you have built the fence or wall it will become the property of Merthyr Valleys Homes' and we will then maintain and look after it in the future. However we do not have sufficient resources to maintain and repair hundreds of fences and walls people



have erected. We will of course encourage you and we will give you permission to keep maintaining, painting and looking after the boundary you have erected.

If you do not keep the boundary in good condition and if it poses a risk to you, your family or other residents and becomes dangerous or unsightly at any point in the future it will be our decision whether to either remove the whole enclosure, a part of it or make good with a repair.

Please be mindful that we will only carry out the most cost effective solution and this is unlikely to be replacing panels or rebuilding walls.

Incoming services

Depending what fence you are fitting you may need to dig into the ground for footings for the fence posts. All homes have a series of incoming services such as gas, electricity, water and telephones and regrettably we do not hold any plans where these supplies and services are located on individual homes.

You must safely investigate where you decide to place posts and foundations and you must carry out all work safely.

You should consider the risks of damaging any incoming services when carrying out the work.

Please be aware if you do cause any damage it will be your responsibility to report this directly to the service provider and then to Merthyr Valleys Homes. You will also be responsible for any incurred costs caused by your actions in damaging the services and reconnecting them.

You can find more information on how to find out information on incoming services on the following websites;

Western Power Line search
www.linesearchbeforeudig.co.uk

Wales & West Utilities Gas
www.wvutilities.co.uk

Welsh Water Dwr Cymru
www.dwrcymru.com

Hedges



Choosing to use suitable hedging is the most environmentally friendly solution that is perfect for wildlife. Hedge plants are relatively cheap, easy to plant and can form an attractive boundary more quickly than you may imagine.

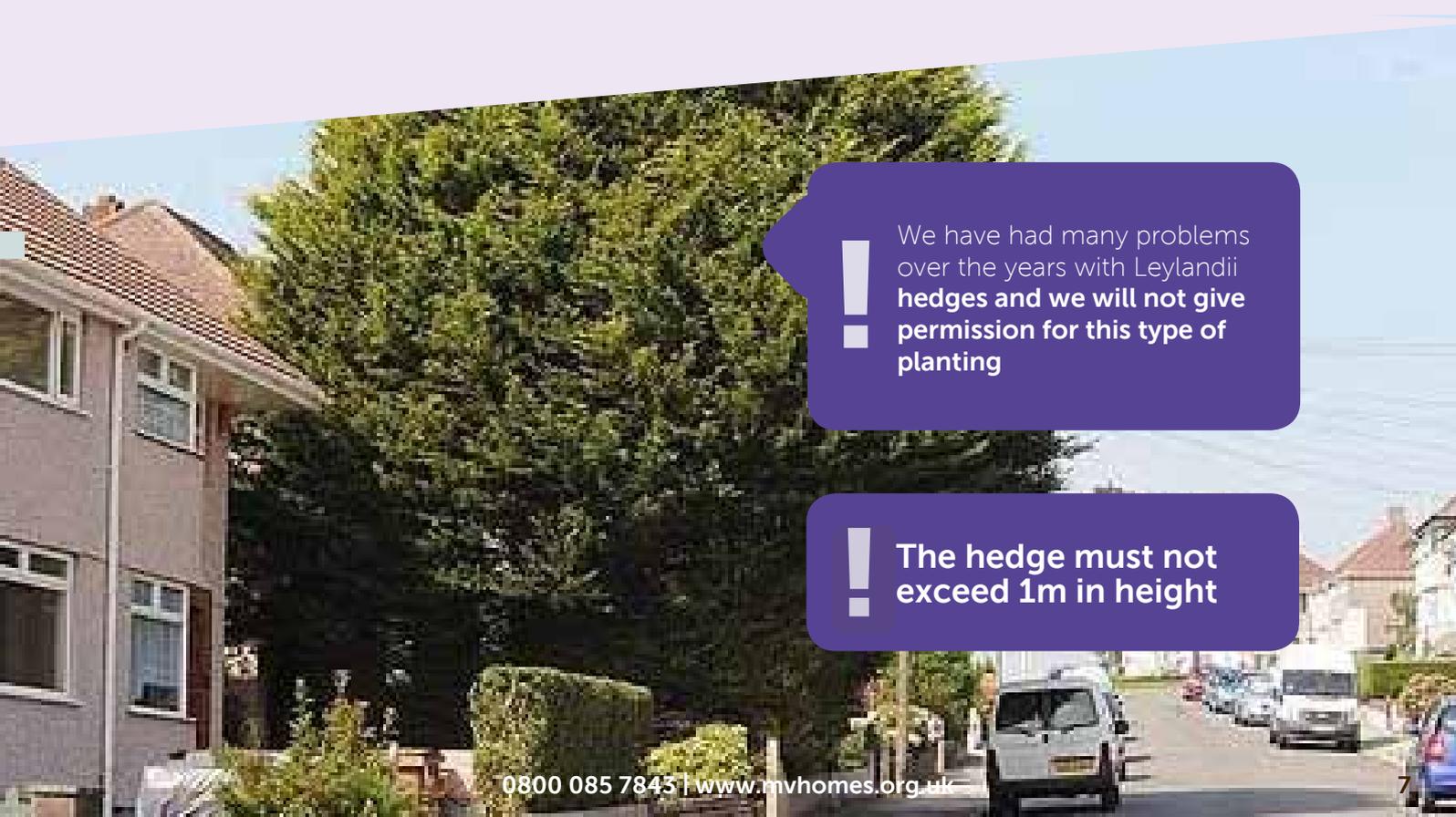
Please also be mindful of the drainage channels when planting your chosen hedging in case roots of the plants grow into or damage the channels. For information on hedges and planting we would recommend visiting the Royal Horticulture Society at www.rhs.org.uk

Please remember this solution will need continuous maintenance and this will be your responsibility to ensure it does not grow too high, impose on neighbouring gardens or public footpaths. We have had many problems over the years with **Leylandii hedges and we will not give permission for this type of planting** as they grow very high and very quickly as this picture shows.

Information taken from the Royal Horticultural Society website states that the top 4 hedging plants are;

1. **Conifer** – Taxus Baccata (yew)
2. **Evergreen** – Portuguese Laurel
3. **Low growing Lavandula angustifolia**
4. **Hornbeam or Rosa rugosa** – Native to the UK

Their website has many more examples and tips for planting and creating effective hedges. When you use the online application form you just need to let us know what you intend to plant and we will give you consent to enclose your garden – it is that simple.



We have had many problems over the years with **Leylandii hedges and we will not give permission for this type of planting**



The hedge must not exceed 1m in height

Wooden Fencing

Another simple and cheap option would be to erect a boundary of wooden fencing.

We will not stipulate what style of wooden fencing you may use, although we ask you during the application process to tell us about the type of fence you wish to use. Again this solution will need continuous maintenance by you. You must take consideration of where your fence posts are to be installed and where incoming services run through your garden. Please be aware that it will be your responsibility to report and pay for damage to incoming services damaged during the process.



We would suggest you use new materials to create your wooden fence, however we will approve recycled materials, although we may ask you for more information on this type of work to ensure it is carried out to a good quality standard.

As mentioned previously; if the fence becomes a hazard or is not maintained; Merthyr Valleys Homes will remove it. Using timber fencing on front garden boundaries may be a cheap design solution and initially look good, but without annual maintenance and re-painting/re-staining it will quickly degrade, be susceptible to vandalism and will become an eyesore for other residents. It will be your responsibility to maintain and ensure it is kept to a high standard.

This picture is of an area of Merthyr Valleys Homes properties that have already fenced in their gardens and are maintained to a good standard. We would like you to consider the visual impact of your fence as well as your privacy to ensure it does not have a negative impact on the community.

You must adhere to the planning guidance and the fence must not be more than 1m high.

YouTube

How to install a fence:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ptcRhU9BgA

Below, three choices are given for types of fencing you are able to use, please pick from these choices:



A. Pickett/ Pale Fencing

B. Feather Edge Fencing

C. Closeboard Fencing

Once you have submitted your application with all the relevant sections completed, we will send one of our officers to your property to mark the agreed boundary; please do not start work until this visit has been undertaken and you have received written approval from us.



We will not approve panel fencing unless it complies with planning permission

Hints and tips when appointing a contractor



1

Check for insurances; both employers and public liability.

2

Never pay for materials/ work up front (before the work is complete)

3

Ask for reference of previous work, ask if you can go and see the completed work.

4

You must also ensure you use a competent tradesman or contractor

with adequate insurance to carry out the works. It is your responsibility to ensure the work is carried out to an acceptable standard. We will not approve the contractor nor recommend anyone this is your risk and responsibility.

A brick garden wall

You may choose to build a brick wall around your boundary. This option can be expensive in the short term but has lower ongoing maintenance costs. It does however require more thought and pre planning.

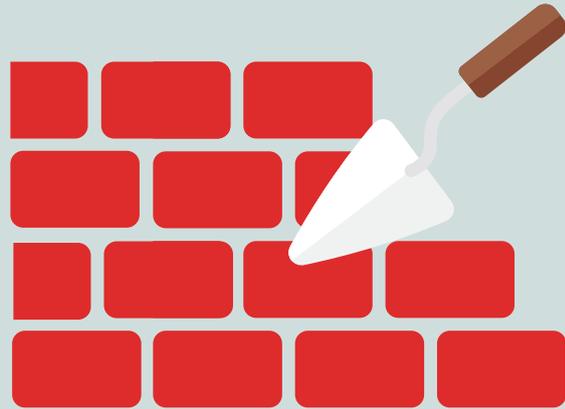
If you choose this option there are a number of things we would like you to consider prior to filling out the application form;

- What type of brick or block finish will you use?
- Will the wall include metal railings?
- What finish will the top of the wall have?

We will ask you to provide a detailed specification of the work you will be completing. An example of this is given below.

Freestanding walls should be designed in accordance with BS EN 1996-1 Design of Masonry Structure or BRE Good Building Guide 14

www.gov.uk/guidance/your-garden-walls-better-to-be-safe#garden-walls

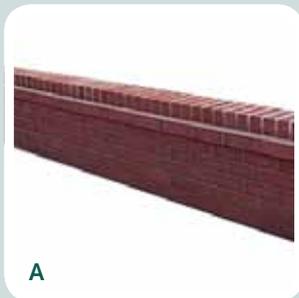


All walls must conform to the following guidelines; if you have a rendered property the wall must match the rendered finish, if you have a brick finish property the wall should be constructed using a matching brick finish.

You must also ensure you use a competent tradesman or contractor with adequate insurance to carry out the works. It is your responsibility to ensure the work is carried out to an acceptable standard. We will not approve the contractor nor recommend anyone this is your risk and responsibility.

The wall must not exceed 1m in height

Below are a number of examples of wall types you may consider:



A



B



C



D

A. Brick Wall

B. Brick with timber fencing panel

C. Brick wall metal fencing

D. Block work wall dash finish and coping stone

MVH will be pleased to give you a quote to build a wall. Please use the online application form. If you do ask us to do the work we will require the money in advance and you cannot pay for a boundary wall through your rent.

A metal fence

The final option you may consider is a metal fence to enclose your garden. This can be a good option and can be done at a reasonable cost. However, without regular maintenance and if required, repainting they can degrade and become an eyesore for other residents. It will be your responsibility to maintain and ensure it is kept to a high standard.

! We will not provide you with permission to install strand wire fencing to the front boundary as we believe this will lower the quality of the neighbourhood they are easily damaged and quickly become unsightly.

! The fence must not exceed 1m in height

If you choose this option there are a number of things we would like you to consider prior to filling out the application form;

- **What type of metal fence will you use?**
- **How will you fix the metal fence to the ground?**

We will ask you to provide a detailed specification of the work you will be completing.

Below are a number of examples of metal fence types you may consider:



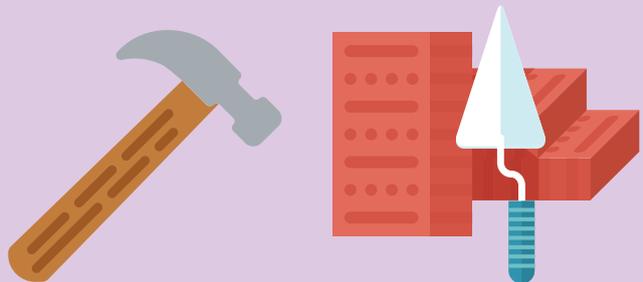
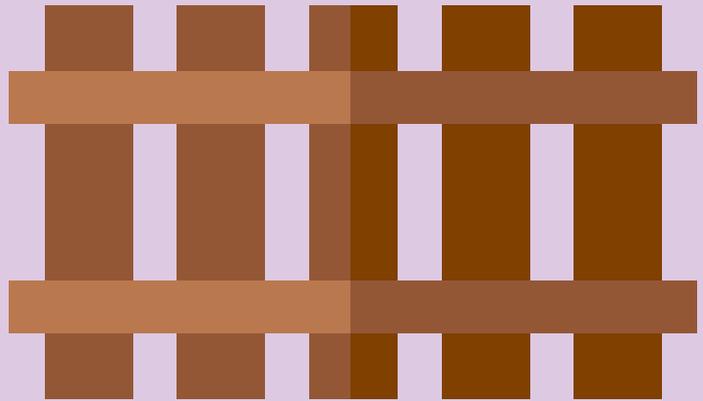
- A. Hoop top metal fencing
B. Decorative metal fencing

! We will also not approve the use of palisade fencing or fencing with sharp spiked tops, as this could be seen as a health and safety risk.

Members discount on building materials

Merthyr Valleys Homes is an organisation owned and controlled by our members. Membership is open to all tenants and people over the age of 16 who live in your home with you.

As a member of our mutual you have strong voice in how and why we do things at Merthyr Valleys Homes but we also have a member discount system at a number of local shops and services. We have negotiated a 10% discount at Jasonic Builder Merchants up at Pant Industrial estate on all building materials including bricks and fencing that you could use in enclosing your garden.



You can get more information on membership by contacting our Membership Officer on 01685 727786 or emailing membership@mvhomes.org.uk

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MVH now has a Facebook page!
We've launched our own Facebook page, make sure to like us.



@MerthyrVH

