

4

Materials - Hard Landscaping



...paved street



... acres of tarmac

What is 'Hard' Landscaping?

4.5.1 The space surrounding buildings can be shaped by, or clothed in, living materials such as trees, shrubs or grass or inert materials such as concrete, brickwork or cobbles. The living materials are referred to as 'soft' landscaping; the inert materials are called 'hard' landscaping.

4.5.2 The importance of soft landscaping is well recognised but hard landscaping frequently appears to be left to chance, yet it can be the 'hard' landscaping, the walls, fences and surfaces, which dictates the character of the spaces we visit. Who has failed to be depressed by the acres of tarmac which dominate so many modern estates or be charmed by the paved streets of an historic town?

The Function of Hard Landscapes

4.5.3 Hard landscaping may be used for many reasons, such as to:

- create links between buildings
- enclose space
- create a 'theme' within a development
- define private areas
- give security to private areas
- cater for pedestrian or vehicular movement
- deter pedestrian or vehicular movement
- assist people with disabilities
- visually link a development with its surrounding

Choosing materials

4.5.4 Hard landscaping materials should be selected not only for their appearance but also for their ability to withstand the use to which they are being put.





Above: Good use of hard and soft landscaping to create a "country park" approach to a new housing scheme.



Right: Traditional boundary treatment in an urban location.

The use of appropriate, good quality and durable materials will frequently reduce long-term maintenance costs whereas the use of an inappropriate material, purely because it has low initial cost, is often a false economy.

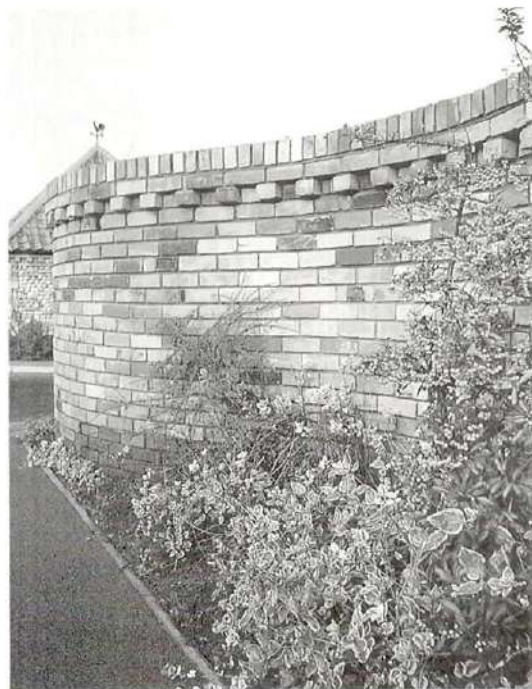
4.5.5 When selecting materials developers should ask themselves:

- Does the material enhance the surrounding buildings?
- Is the material appropriate for the character of the development?; this may be formal or informal, rural or urban, modern or traditional.
- Is the material suitable for its proposed use?
- How does the material weather? - i.e. Does it improve with age? if not, is there a better choice of material available?

Urban or Rural

4.5.6 Urban areas tend to be tight knit with buildings in close proximity to one another. In these locations boundary walls, railings and gates, together with the traditional surface treatments of roads and footpaths, all combine to make an important contribution to the character of the area. Soft landscaping is generally subordinate to the buildings, although individual mature trees can have a particular significance in such areas.

4.5.7 Rural areas tend to be characterised by a feeling of spaciousness with the soft landscaping dominating rather than the buildings. There may be a compact group of buildings around a village green or flanking the street but other buildings will be set in spacious plots and, generally, the hedges, trees and gardens are visually as important as the buildings themselves.



Left: Good modern example of a serpentine or "crinkle-crankle" wall.



Simple timber palisade fence used to good effect.

4.5.8 These basic differences should be recognised when deciding between hard or soft landscaping for any new development; for example, a brick wall may be an appropriate enclosure for a garden in an urban development but a hedge could be more appropriate in a rural area.

Walls

4.6.1 Appropriately designed walls can greatly enhance the appearance of new developments by physically and visually linking them to the established street scene. If old brick walls exist on or around a potential development site every effort should be made to retain them.

4.6.2 'Crinkle-crankle' or 'serpentine' walls, which comprise a series of curves on plan, can provide visual interest as well as structural stability.

4.6.3 Traditionally, walls would be capped with a brick-on-edge detail or with semi-circular or ridged clay bricks. Plinths, piers, corbelling and buttresses would frequently form part of the design.

4.6.4 Concrete copings, concrete blocks and perforated, patterned concrete screen blocks are not traditional to Suffolk and should, in the main, be avoided.

Fences

4.7.1 Simple timber palisade fences were frequently used around gardens in rural areas and, although they do not provide a complete visual or security barrier, they do mark boundaries and deter encroachment in a very pleasing manner.

4.7.2 Close boarded fences provide more effective screening and security but can become visually obtrusive unless combined with substantial soft landscaping.





Inappropriate use of a brick wall in a rural setting...
a hedge would have been better



Traditional use of steps
or railings to create an
imposing entrance.

4.7.3 In rural developments woven wattle fencing, cleft chestnut or split logs supported on wooden rails, used in conjunction with hedge planting, can be appropriate.

4.7.4 Woven and lapped slatted timber fence panels are frequently used in both urban and rural situations purely because of the low installation cost. They are however easily damaged and difficult to repair and are rarely suitable in any prominent location.

4.7.5 Timber post and rail or post and wire fences come in many forms and are satisfactorily used for field and roadside boundaries in the countryside. However, the use of concrete posts and chainlink fencing looks out of place in the countryside and can mar an otherwise attractive street scene in both town and village.

Metal Railings

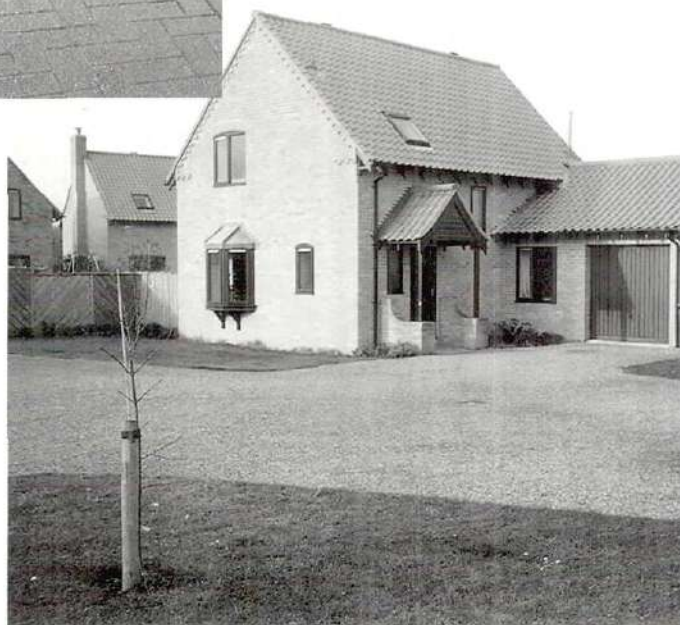
4.8.1 Metal railings were frequently used in conjunction with a flight of steps to create an imposing entrance to a property. Similarly, before the war, many houses, churchyards, formal parks and gardens in both towns and villages, were enclosed with metal railings, often set on low brick walls.

4.8.2 Traditional designs of railings are readily available and their use in carefully selected locations can help to give an established feel to a new development. Railings can also be used to advantage in providing security against intruders without creating a total visual barrier.

4.8.3 Many large country properties or areas of parkland were enclosed with fences consisting of cast metal posts and horizontal metal rails and, again, these can be used to create a theme to a new development.



"... paviors can be combined with 'traditional materials'..."



.. in rural areas a simple sealed gravel surfacing may be appropriate...

4.8.4 Timber posts and tubular rail, or timber post and chain fences, may be appropriate in a small number of locations but their use and design may cause a hazard to young children or to the partially sighted.

Hard Surfaces

4.9.1 Hard surfaces in new developments have as much effect on the appearance as the materials chosen for the buildings themselves and should therefore be given the same careful consideration.

4.9.2 In the past, in the more important and heavily used areas, stone flags and kerbs would have been used to provide a smooth, hard-wearing surface for pedestrians; granite setts, cobbles or paviors were laid to accommodate vehicular traffic; softer bricks were used for informal paved areas in gardens and gravel was laid in areas with limited pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

4.9.3 The advent of bitumen macadam led to the decline in use of many of these traditional materials and many modern estates have suffered from a surfeit of 'black top'.

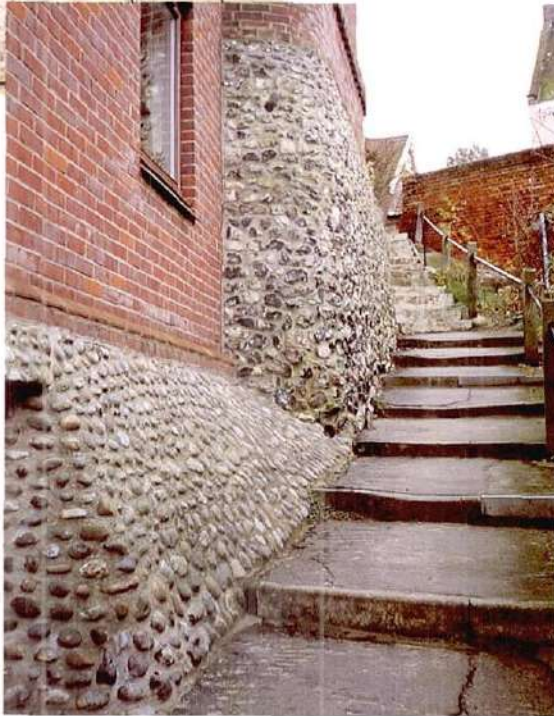
4.9.4 Recent mass production of clay and concrete block paviors has provided the designer with cost-effective small scale blocks, available in a wide range of colours and suitable for both pedestrian and vehicular use. Such paviors can be combined with the traditional materials such as stone slabs, granite setts or cobbles to create hard surfacing which will complement traditional or modern styles of new development.

4.9.5 In rural areas a simple sealed gravel surfacing to roads and footpaths will often be appropriate.





Examples of
bold use of
texture and colour.



Textures and Colours

4.10.1 The texture and colour of materials should be carefully selected to create a desired effect rather than being used at random; for example, garden walls built in the same colour brick as the dwellings can give consistency to an area.

4.10.2 Particular care needs to be taken where new materials are being placed in close proximity to old materials; a 'red' concrete pavior often appears pink or purple when placed against a traditional Suffolk red brick wall.

4.10.3 Changes of texture and colour can be used to good effect to denote changes of function; for example changing from a smooth surfaced footpath to a rough surface such as cobbles for areas of pedestrian deterrent paving.



Examples of well considered use of Hard Landscaping





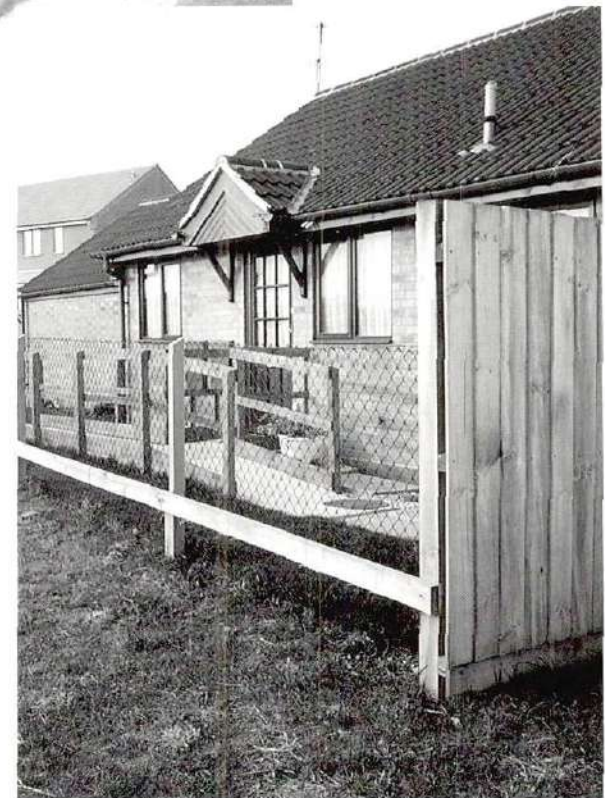
▲
A cobbled margin
which is more concrete
than cobble!



▲
Lack of attention to detail



A small development dominated by blacktop!



Fencing which detracts from the
appearance of property.

Avoid these Common Mistakes

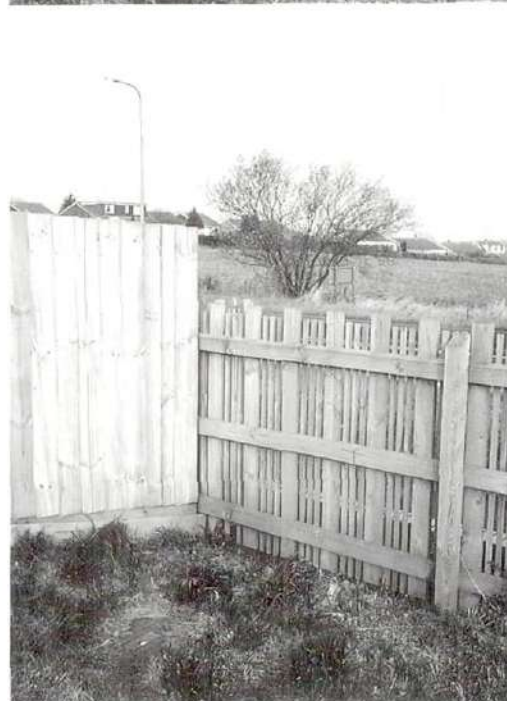


▲ Poorly detailed angles . . .

. . . and junctions. ▲



▲ Unscreened rear gardens.



▲ What happened here?

Avoid these Common Mistakes

