

Appendix A

Garage Conversions

The purpose of this Appendix is to aid people who wish to convert their integral or attached garage to a habitable room. It details where there will be a need to provide replacement off-street car parking spaces, and sets out basic design criteria around window design, positioning and size, materials, landscaping and bin storage, which the Council expects to be complied with before planning permission will be granted.

This guidance does not apply to the conversion to habitable accommodation of detached garages or garages in blocks.

There are a large number of houses (in particular within newer developments in the Borough) which have been built with integral garages. In some cases, occupants may wish to convert their garage into additional living space.

Depending on the particular development and when planning permission was granted, a condition may have been attached to the permission that only allows the garage to be used for parking a car. If such a condition applies to the development where you live and you want to convert your garage you will need to apply for planning permission. You can find out whether there is a condition affecting your garage by searching for the decision notice relating to your house on the Council's website at:

www.hertsmere.gov.uk/planningsearch

You may need to search by the original name of the site, in the case of large developments (e.g. Shenley Hospital, Fire Research Station). If you are unable to find the decision notice, you can contact the planning department in writing at planning@hertsmere.gov.uk to check whether there are any restrictions on your property. This service is free, and you will receive a response within 10 working days.

Where garages have an internal width less than that suitable for parking a car, there is a general presumption in favour of allowing their conversion into habitable rooms. This is because the loss of the garage should not add any pressure to parking in the area.

A garage is considered too small for parking a car if it has an internal width of less than 3m (our requirement since 2006), an internal depth of less than 4.8m, and an opening width of less than 2.5m (our requirement since 2012).

Where integral garages measure 3m x 4.8m or larger they are considered to be capable of being used to park a car, whether or not you

currently use the garage for this purpose. If you wish to convert a garage that meets the size standards it is expected that you will need to have sufficient off-street parking remaining in line with the Council's Parking Standards SPD which can be viewed online at:

www.hertsmere.gov.uk/parkingstandards

Where the Council requires you to demonstrate that you have sufficient off-street parking, you should note that the creation of an additional habitable room may itself increase the off-street parking requirement. To meet the Council's Parking Standards, the parking space lost will need to be replaced within your property following the design guidance provided in this Appendix.

This guidance is particularly relevant to the following modern developments where the garages are known to be smaller than the current standards would allow:

- *Former Fire Research Station and Furzehill School sites near Elstree and Borehamwood Station (including Shakespeare Drive, Wordsworth Gardens, Coleridge Way etc.)*
- *Shenley Hospital Site, Shenley*
- *Studio Way development, Borehamwood*

On these developments, the Council will generally look favourably upon applications to convert garages into habitable rooms, subject to this guidance being followed.

Window design, positioning and size, and materials

NOTE: The guidance on this page applies to all properties where planning permission is required to convert the garage.

- a. *As integral and attached garages are normally located to the front of a house, any alterations can have a big impact on the appearance of the house and the streetscene. Therefore replacement windows need to be sensitive to the existing building.*
- b. *The size and design of the window which replaces the garage door should either reflect the windows in the rest of the house, or the width of the garage door it replaces. Regard should also be had to existing garage conversions in the immediate vicinity. Where adjoining conversions take place simultaneously, there may be more scope to permit differences in the width and height of replacement windows compared to other windows in those properties, provided the two properties reflect each other.*

- c. The materials used to block up the garage doorway must match those used in the rest of the house.

- i. Good practice examples: left – identical conversions have been carried out at neighbouring houses so although the windows are narrower than the width of the original garages, symmetry is retained. The lintels above the windows have also been made narrower to match the size of the windows and match those on upper floors.



Below – garages are set back and the house is not part of a pair/terrace, so window design has a lesser impact on the appearance of the property. The size and design of the window and line of decorative red bricks match those in the existing house.



- d. With linked detached houses, where planning permission is required to convert a linked garage to a habitable room, consideration will be given to the effect this would have on the streetscene and the character of the area.
- e. If your garage has previously been converted and the garage door has been retained, then any subsequent window that is added should follow the guidance above.

- ii. Window designs which are not normally acceptable: replacement window is too small, and does not match the width of windows on upper floors. The wide lintel above the garage door has been left in place, creating an odd appearance which does not enhance the appearance of the house or terrace.



Bin Storage

- f. The storage of wheelie bins and recycling boxes on your property should be considered when thinking about converting your garage. Due to the number and large size of bins in the borough and the small size of many front gardens, there is little space to store the bins in an accessible and attractive fashion. Where houses are terraced and have no side access gate, wheelie bins often dominate the streetscene and block the pavement.
- g. Where bins are currently stored in front of an unused garage, they may be an unattractive feature if stored in front of a window.
- h. Bins must be accommodated within your property as they must not be stored on the public highway. Storing bins permanently on the public highway can block access for people using the footway. This can be particularly problematic for wheelchair users and people with pushchairs.
- i. Most houses in Hertsmere have 3x 240 litre wheelie bins (72cm deep x 58cm wide x 1.07m high) and 1x 38 litre recycling box, which all need to be accommodated within your property.
- j. The photographs below show existing and suggested arrangements.

- i. Current bin storage arrangements typical of many new developments, with bins obstructing the footway or in front of garages.



ii. Recommended bin storage arrangements



proposals which involve the removal of all vegetation and soft landscaping and turn the entire front garden into hardstanding will normally be refused. Most new developments have been designed with some green areas which soften and add character to the streetscene. The cumulative impact of the removal of these areas creates a poor quality and unattractive environment for all residents.

Parking Provision

- k. For all properties seeking to create additional off-street parking as part of a planning application, if this cannot be accommodated on your drive without compromising the appearance of the property and the streetscene, planning permission may be refused.
- l. For all properties that have already been extended on the upper floors or in the roofspace there may be a requirement for additional off-street parking following the conversion of the garage.
- m. Please refer to the example scenarios given at the end of this section for an indication of how much parking may be required in particular circumstances. Also refer to the Parking Standards SPD available on the Council’s website.
- n. In some limited cases, where garages which measure more than 3m x 4.8m and on-street parking is not a problem, additional off-street parking may not be required. If you believe this is the case, your application for planning permission needs to include evidence that sufficient on-street parking space is available.

Off-street Parking and Landscaping

NOTE: The guidance on this page primarily applies to those properties seeking to convert garages larger than 3m x 4.8m. In other locations, you are encouraged to follow this advice as far as is practicably possible.

- o. If you need to provide an additional car parking space on your front drive, careful consideration should be given to the layout of the parking area and its relationship to any soft landscaping in your front garden.
- p. Where garages measure more than 3m x 4.8m and additional parking is required,

ii. Good practice single driveway layout, retaining planting and grass which add visual interest and soften the streetscene, and also allow for the sustainable drainage of surface water from the area of hardstanding.



- q. Similarly, where new hardstanding is proposed, this must either be constructed of porous materials, or there must be provision to ensure that water runoff is directed to permeable areas within the front garden. This is to prevent water runoff being directed onto the highway, and to allow the sustainable drainage of surface water from the hardstanding into the ground, rather than directing this to surface water drains or sewers, the cumulative impact of which exacerbates localised surface water flooding.
- r. On higher density developments where space is limited it can be very difficult to achieve the required number of parking spaces and retain landscaping. In these cases, it will not always be possible to convert the garage to an additional bedroom. Pre-application advice should be sought in order to gauge the views of planning officers before an application is submitted. See www.hertsmere.gov.uk/pre-applications for more information.

Conservation Areas

- s. Where additional off-street parking is required within a conservation area (whatever the age of the property), it will be important to consider the impact changes to the front garden will have on the character and appearance of the area. Where the provision of off-street parking would result in an unacceptable impact on the conservation area, such applications will be refused.

ii. Good practice double driveway layout. Brick paving allows sustainable drainage, and visual interest is improved with a planting strip on the boundary retaining some vegetation. Below – where houses have a wider frontage, it is easier to accommodate 2 vehicles and retain planting (right-hand image).



iii. Driveway layouts which are not good practice: left image - impermeable tarmac surfacing. No planting between houses. Street scene becomes bland and sterile. Centre image – lamp post in centre of drive renders double drive unusable.



Examples

t. Scenarios

A. You have a 3-bed, 3-storey town house with an integral garage and 1 parking space on the drive. The garage measures 2.8m x 4.8m internally, so is too small to accommodate a modern car and you want to convert it to a study.

i. The loss of the garage does not count as the loss of a parking space because it is too small to be useable for parking.

ii. The replacement window must comply with the guidelines above.

B. You have a 3-bed house with an integral garage measuring 3m x 4.8m internally, so is large enough to house a car. You want to convert it to a study. You have 1 parking space on the front drive.

i. A 3-bed house requires 2 off-street parking spaces. You will lose 1 space by converting the garage, so must demonstrate that 2 spaces of 2.4m x 4.8m can be accommodated on your property in the drawings submitted with a planning application.

C. You have a 5-bed house with 5 habitable rooms on the ground/lower ground floor and you wish to convert the garage to create an extra habitable room. You currently have 3 parking spaces on the drive and one in the garage.

i. Two additional parking spaces are required; one to compensate for the loss of the space in the garage, and one because following the conversion the house will have more than 5 habitable rooms at ground or lower ground floor level. Therefore, you would need to demonstrate in the drawings submitted with a planning application that 5 cars could fit on your drive.

In all cases where additional parking is required, if you cannot accommodate the required parking spaces on your drive without compromising the appearance of the property and the streetscene, then planning permission will be refused.

This means that you will need to demonstrate through the drawings submitted with your planning application that the creation of the required parking spaces can be achieved within a landscaping scheme for the front garden (see paragraphs o to r above).