Vehicle Crossings Policy

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1 General

Using Section 184 of the Highways Act 1980, the Council has the authority to construct crossings or to require the occupiers of premises to construct vehicle crossings in certain circumstances. In exercising this power the Council must have regard to safe access to the premises and the safe passage of vehicles on the highway.

2 Highway Safety

Highway safety considerations will take into account factors such as proximity to a junction, roundabout, traffic signals, pelican or other pedestrian crossings, or where there is inadequate visibility. These are almost invariably subjective judgements, which may also depend on a variety of other site characteristics such as volume of traffic, width of carriageway, existing service roads, footway and/or verge. In these cases the expert advice of the Council’s Planning Transportation Unit will be sought.

3 Dimensions

3.1 Front of Property Dimension Requirements

In order to accommodate a vehicle, based on size and turning characteristics of a ‘standard’ car, the property frontage must have the following dimensions:

- The minimum required clear depth from front of building to back of footway is 4.8m.
- The minimum required width of property frontage (for a 2.7m wide crossing) is 5.1m.
- The minimum required width of property frontage (for a 3.6m wide crossing) is 6m.

Where properties are arranged in a radial formation ie. the frontage of the property narrows towards the highway, a minimum frontage dimension (adjoining the highway) of 3m will be acceptable provided the minimum frontage width at mid distance is 5.1m.

3.2 Vehicle Crossing Dimensions

The width of a crossing and its position relative to the frontage of the property may be influenced by a number of factors such as widths of carriageway, footway and/or verge, and the width and depth of the area available for parking. In general the width of a crossing is limited to that necessary to facilitate its proper use.

- The Maximum crossing width (lowered kerb length) is 3.6m.
- The minimum crossing width (lowered Kerb length) is 2.7m

3.3 Widening of existing crossings

Subject to all criteria, an existing crossing may be widened to a maximum overall width of 3.6m.

3.4 Minimum spacing between crossings

The two crossings shall be separated by at least one kerbstone (0.9m of full kerb face) or a minimum of 0.6m of full face kerb to prevent otherwise the creation of a double width crossing and to provide adequate facilities for pedestrians.

4 Hard standing Controls
The applicant must arrange for and have installed a suitable surface within the property frontage prior to construction of the vehicle crossing.

In order to protect the Borough’s suburban character and for environmental sustainability reasons the Council actively encourages careful planning of the hard standing construction. The proposal should minimise any negative impact and maximise positive impact.

Where the hard standing involves the removal of soft landscaping within the property frontage, the applicant should arrange to keep the hard surface to a minimum (landscaped where feasible and practical). This can be achieved by creating paved tracks wide enough to accommodate the car wheels.

In all cases the frontage area should consist of a minimum of 33% (one third part) soft landscaping or permeable material. Materials will not be considered permeable where bedded on an impermeable base.

The hard standing must tie-in flush to the back of footway level.

Properties with ‘un bound’ gravel or similar surfaces must provide a minimum 600mm of hard standing across the width of the open frontage.

5 Drainage
The applicant/property owner must provide suitable drainage to prevent surface water discharging onto the highway prior to the construction of the crossing. Enforcement of this requirement is possible under section 163 of the Highways Act (1980).

6 Street Furniture
The position of street furniture and utility company plant may affect the location of a vehicle crossing. If necessary and in certain circumstances these can be re-sited, at the applicant’s expense. Street furniture includes lamp columns, sign posts, nameplates etc. and if relocation is deemed possible the applicant must bear the full cost. With utility plant the applicant should approach the relevant company direct and agree with them if relocation is possible.
A minimum clearance distance between the edge of the crossing and any item of street furniture of 600mm is required.
Relocation of street furniture should take into account the impact on neighbouring properties and, where practicable, allow for future crossing construction.

7 Second Crossings
There will be a presumption in favour of allowing second crossing on heavily trafficked roads (Classified) for road safety benefits of allowing vehicles to enter and leave in a forward aspect subject to the considerations on trees.

On all other roads, there will be a presumption against a second crossing where verges or trees will be affected.

8 Controlled Parking Zones
Applications within CPZs will be required to cover the costs associated with any necessitated alterations to on street parking or waiting restrictions.

9 Planning Considerations

The council’s planning objectives, as enshrined in the Unitary Development Plan include the protection and positive enhancement of street side greenery and forecourt greenery. In most instances planning permission is not required for a crossover and hardstanding, and this objective can be achieved only through advice (e.g. advice guide attached). However, planning permission is required to form a vehicle access point onto a classified road or where Article 4 Direction has removed relevant permitted development rights.

Properties which are statutorily listed or which are within Conservation Areas may require council consent for the changes involved in the boundary or setting of the building. Specific design advice is available in policy statements and design guides which have been published; this advice takes into account the objectives of preservation or enhancement of character and appearance.

Where the Council has control, it will attempt to achieve a balance between hard and soft landscaping and may require the use of specific materials for hard surfacing including vehicle crossings where the applicant will be expected to meet the full cost. Proposals will be considered individually, but their contribution to the overall street-scene and any cumulative effect of crossings and front garden parking will be taken into consideration. Where possible, use should be made of existing access or alternative access points, such as from the rear of the property. Safety implications of boundary treatments will be considered. Adequate visibility for drivers emerging from a frontage must be ensured, as must the safety of pedestrians.

10 Crossings on or close to junctions

More than two-thirds of urban road accidents occur at junctions. Forward visibility for turning vehicles is often limited and driver’s attention has to cope with a variety of factors in addition to the turning manoeuvre e.g. other traffic and pedestrians. It is important therefore that the highway authority ensures, as far as reasonably possible that additional potential conflicts, such as parking or accesses are kept to a minimum.

The impact of an access on pedestrians also has to be considered. The majority of pedestrians crossing the side road will do so close to the junction, probably across the corner radii, unless the footway along the main road is very wide.

It is clearly necessary to separate the vehicle access from the pedestrian crossing. This means that the vehicle access must be set back sufficiently to allow a pedestrian crossing and associated tactile paving to be laid closer to the junction, with a short length of full height kerb (to provide some physical separation) before the taper (the kerb that is the full height one end and flush with the carriageway the other end) starts for the vehicle crossing.

The principle of refusing access on a busy road* if a safer alternative exists to the property from a side road or the rear, is long established. As applications for vehicle crossings on classified roads also require planning permission, applicants can appeal to the Government’s Planning Inspectorate against a refusal. Such appeals are consistently dismissed.
*In this context busy road means a Classified Road which is split into two categories as defined in the Council's Unitary Development Plan as follows:—

A) **London Distributor Road** e.g. Uxbridge Road, Kenton Road and B) **Restricted Borough Distributor Road** such as Kenton Road, Eastcote Lane.

Access should only be taken from the less busy road (defined as the road of lower status according to the Harrow Unitary Development Plan) unless deemed acceptable by the Council’s Planning Transportation Unit.

Where access is required to the side of the front garden it should preferably be located as far from the junction corner as possible, but in any event the tapered kerb must not start less than 6m from the channel of the main road or 1.8 metres from an existing dropped kerb for pedestrians (whichever distance is greater from the channel line).

The existing policy and practice of charging the costs of re-sitting street furniture (to allow the construction of a vehicle crossing) to the applicant be extended to include costs of relocating such pedestrian dropped kerbs.

11 **Crossing Construction Type**

The choice of surfacing type (i.e. block paving, bitmac) is determined by the existing adjoining footway and crossing construction. In some instances the applicant may have the option to choose a particular surfacing material where the Council deems appropriate.

12 **Highway Trees**

The presence of a highway tree may determine the acceptability of a crossing application.

Removal of trees or root pruning required in order to facilitate crossing construction, will only be carried out subject to the criteria stipulated in the council’s Tree Strategy.

The Council’s Arboricultural officer will be required to report on the condition of any tree affected by a proposed crossing and the feasibility of construction.

If the tree is dead, dying or dangerous it will be removed and the construction can take place.

If the tree is healthy and has a foreseeable life of more than 5 years then the tree will remain and the application will be refused.

If the tree is over mature or in decline and is seen to have a life expectancy of 5 years or less then the application will be approved where the applicant would pay for the removal and replacement of two new trees in the locality.
At the discretion of the council’s arboricultural officer a non mature healthy tree may be removed. If practicable it shall be replanted at the nearest appropriate location. If replanting is deemed impractical, two replacement trees will be required.

In some cases the tree may not be directly in the line of the crossing, but the construction may affect the root zone. A safety margin, as outlined in NJUG 10 (National Joint Utilities Group Guidelines for the planning, installation and maintenance of utility services in proximity to trees), shows the precautionary area to be 4 x the trunk circumference.

If the proposed crossing falls within the protective zone the application will be refused. However, the applicant may pay for a trial excavation (within a grass verge or any footway construction) to determine if roots are present within the required construction depth. The excavation will be permanently reinstated prior to the construction of a vehicle crossing. Excavation and reinstatement costs, to be paid in advance by the applicant, shall be based on the Council’s current contract rates.

13 Fees / Charges

Applicants must provide a completed standard application form and application fee. The fee is non-refundable and covers the cost of reviewing the application, providing advice on feasibility and an estimate cost to the applicant.

The estimate shall be valid for three months from date of postage. Applicants requesting crossing works based on an ‘elapsed’ estimate will be required to reapply.

If the application accords with this policy the applicant will be provided with an estimated cost of constructing a crossover. Once this sum is paid to the Council, construction will be programmed and the applicant informed of dates etc. This will be within six weeks of receipt of confirmed payment.

All associated fees for vehicle crossings will be reviewed annually.

14 Fast Track Applications

A ‘Fast Track’ application service will guarantee an applicant a decision within 10 working days of receipt. The charge of this service will be double the standard fee.

15 Enforcement

15.1 Illegal Crossings

Illegal crossings cause damage to the highway, endanger public safety and blight the environment. In cases where vehicles access a property by means other than an approved crossing the Council will take appropriate enforcement action under section 184 of the Highways Act (1980)
15.2 Highway Obstruction
In cases where obstruction is caused by a vehicle parked on or overhanging the highway the Council will take appropriate enforcement action under section 137 of the Highways Act (1980).